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Gender and Genre in *Cinquecento* Vocal Music

by

Katherine Ann Moyles Wallace ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Music

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2002

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Abstract

Throughout the Italian *cinquecento*, women's musical performance significantly impacted secular vocal music in the formation of new genres, the social function of music, and the development of musical style. The sixteenth century saw a continuous tradition of women's vocal performance from the musical practices of the early northern duchesses, especially their patronage of the frottola, through the performance of lute songs by courtesans and *gentildonne* in the intellectual *ridotti* and salons of the mid-sixteenth century, to the unprecedented fame and influence of the *virtuosa* soloists and *concerti di donne* of the late 1500s. This study examines these performing women, genres and contexts not as separate phenomena, but as an ongoing practice which, while it crossed class and socio-economic boundaries, was nevertheless linked by societal mores which applauded singing as a socially acceptable accomplishment for cultivated, upper class women while attaching connotations of immorality to women's public performance.

The study is grounded in feminist and semiotic methodology which takes into account the sociological position of women's experience, and posits a performance-based understanding of music. Chapter one explores the socio-economic background of the Renaissance female singer, outlining women's changing status, the ideological division of private and public spheres, and the function of music among different classes; the next two chapters examine the nature of female patronage in the early *cinquecento* and the function of music in the formation of woman's identity as a maker and guardian of culture. Chapter four approaches the phenomenon of pleasure found in hearing women's voices, as well as the dual image of seductive siren and spiritual muse prevalent in contemporary reception literature, from a psychoanalytical/semiotic model derived from Julia Kristeva's unique semanalysis. Modern genre theory is utilized in the fifth chapter to propose a performance-based genre-system which advances the Italian lute song as a defining category, and allows women's contribution to music to emerge. The final chapters problematize the idea of the "professional" female singer, while acknowledging the tremendous impact of highly competent women vocalists on the changing nature of musical style and function.

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Introduction

Throughout the Italian *cinquecento*, women's musical performance significantly impacted secular vocal music in the formation of new genres, the social function of music, and the development of musical style. The sixteenth century saw a continuous tradition of women's vocal performance from the musical practices of the early northern duchesses through the performance of lute songs by courtesans and *gentildonne* in the intellectual *ridotti* and salons of the mid-sixteenth century, to the rise of the *virtuosa* soloists and *concerti di donne* in the late 1500s. This study will examine the performance contexts and genres associated with female singers in northern Italy through the sixteenth century, not as separate phenomena, but as an ongoing, comprehensive practice. While it crosses stylistic and socio-economic boundaries, women's performance practice is nevertheless linked by Renaissance gender ideology which applauded singing as a socially acceptable accomplishment for cultivated women while attaching connotations of immorality to music in general and women's public performance in particular.

The Italian Renaissance is a very familiar period of music history; much has been written about this era, with the majority of studies relying on conventional methodologies that focus on score and manuscript study. Like many fields grounded in nineteenth-century musicology, the study of Renaissance music has been characterized by an intense focus on the composer function, and an attempt to confirm (or, more recently, to problematize) a concise stylistic development over a given period. While this preoccupation with male composers and specific compositions has opened up an immense amount of early music to modern investigation and consumption, it has also enabled musicology to retain a patriarchal hold over the domain of music history, compelling feminists working within a traditional western-white-male interpretation of history to grapple with the confused exclamation, 'why have their been no great women composers?'[1]

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[1] This question was first articulated by Linda Nochlin in 1971 in her essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" Nochlin, while concentrating on the history of painting, "examine[s] the implications of that perennial question (one can, of course, substitute almost any

Feminist theory has attempted to answer this question in a number of ways: by examining the historical and cultural constraints which have caused unequal opportunity for women would-be composers; by celebrating the apparently extraordinary achievement of those few great women who overcame these obstacles and whose music has survived to be eventually included in the Western canon (Hildegard, Caccini, Strozzi, Jacquet de la Guerre, Mendelsohn-Hensel, and Wieck-Schumann, for example); by bringing to light the work of little-known women composers of the past and present; or by exalting the so-called "minor" genres in which women seem to have excelled. Some musicologists have turned to concerns of criticism, attacking gender-biases in music literature, broaching theories of gender construction and sexuality, or exploring the idea of a female compositional voice or a feminine method of listening to explain the paucity of women composers. Only a very few have paused to consider whether or not it is vital to answer this particular question at all—that perhaps we are after all asking the wrong question.

A performance-centred concept of music negates the troublesome question; there *have* been great women singers, and their names and lives have been recorded and celebrated throughout history. In fact, the field of vocal performance is possibly the one area of musical creativity where women have been accorded as much and possibly more recognition than men. "Singing," notes Suzanne Cusick, "is a thing more likely to be done by women than by men" (Cusick 1994a, 21).[2] A cursory observation of trends in choirs, opera, and recordings of vocal music, appears to support the fact that there are more women singers in contemporary culture than men singers. Similarly, an overview of historical vocal performance practice reveals, if not an obvious imbalance in favour of women, at least a prominent presence of female singers throughout history.

In classical art music, female singers hold a privileged space on the performing

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field of human endeavor, with appropriate changes in phrasing): 'Well, if women really *are* equal to men, why have there never been any great women artists (or composers, or mathematicians, or philosophers, or so few of the same)?' " (Nochlin 1994, 94).

[2] Cusick qualifies her statement as "singing, in both art and pop musics" and "singing alone, without apparent mastery of an instrument" but offers no other support for this argument (Cusick 1994a, 21).

stage: from its introduction in the mid-seventeenth century, the term *prima donna* has been used, lauded and misinterpreted much more than its corresponding male designation—in fact, one rarely if ever hears *primo uomo* in a comparable context. In other times and venues as well, women have made their mark as performers, competing or cooperating with their male peers. Studies in popular and world music within the last twenty years attest to the popularity of female performers, although, as Susan McClary points out, "the relatively higher profile of women in popular music and jazz has not meant that they have always received the attention they deserve" (McClary 1993, 404). Linda Dahl in her examination of Jazzwomen, *Stormy Weather*, admits that while "for most of jazz history, until quite recently, it has appeared that few women were part of this community of musicians . . . a long and quite illustrious group of women . . . have participated in jazz from the beginning" (Dahl 1984, x)[3]; Gillian Gaar reaches a similar conclusion in her study of rock and roll (Gaar 1992).[4]

If we move further back in the history of song, we still find that women performers are as influential in the live production and positive reception of vocal music as men. David Montgomery, in his investigation of the performance of Schubert Lieder, cites Anna Milder (1785-1838), Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient (1804-60) and Henriette Grabau (1805-52) along with Johann Michael Vogl (1768-1840), Baron Carl Freiherr von Schönstein (1797-1876), Joseph Staudigl (1807-61) and Franz Schubert himself, as the foremost singers of Schubert's Lieder, during the composer's life time (Montgomery

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[3] Dahl goes on to note that although some became successful instrumentalists and songwriters, recording engineers and producers, band leaders and managers, composers and arrangers, the jazzwoman's most illustrious field was vocal performance: "Who are the jazzwomen? They are the well-known, the stars of song. They are the blues 'royalty' of the twenties. Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Ida Cox. Scores of others. The well-known singers of today, most of whom started in the thirties, a few in the forties. Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Carmen McRae. The ever-felt presence of Billie Holiday. Big-band singers called "canaries" or "warblers" during the swing era. Helen Forrest, Helen O'Connell, Mildred Bailey, Peggy Lee and Anita O'Day—talented white band singers who became stars in their own right. And many, many more. Brazilian, Swedish, British, Japanese. Scat singers. Avant-garde" (Dahl 1984, xi). See also Placksin 1982, Unterbrink 1983, Harrison 1988.

[4] See also Greig 1989, and Steward and Garratt 1984.

1997, 272-277).

Women singers were also prevalent at the zenith of eighteenth-century *opera seria*. Prima donnas such as La Romanina, Francesca Cuzzoni, Faustina Bordoni, Maria Cecilia Coletti and Vittoria Tesi received top billing, proving that women could hold their own on the vocal stage in an age which saw the ecclesiastical government of the Papal States ban female singers from appearing in public while clandestinely encouraging the rise of an incredible new type of operatic vocalist, the *castrato*. Though they sang in the same registers with (arguably) more clarity, power and stamina, *castrati* did not rival female opera singers for popularity or compete with them for parts as they performed predominantly male character roles; in fact male-soprano roles were so specific to their voice type that when a *castrato* was not available, a female performer *en travesti* was preferred to the use of a male falsettist or transposition of the part.[5] Despite the *castrato*'s incredible popularity and stupendous vocal skill, the eighteenth century also "had its share of great tenors and basses and (female) sopranos" (Kimbell 1991, 212). In his eighteenth-century music history, Charles Burney lists several women among the greatest performers of *opera seria*:

> Between the years 1725 and 1740, the musical drama in Italy seems to have attained a degree of perfection and public favour, which perhaps has never been since surpassed. The opera stage from that period being in possession of the *poetry* of Apostolo Zeno and Metastasio; the *compositions* of Leo, Vinci, Hasse, Porpora, and Pergolesi; the *performances* of Farinelli, Carestini, Cafferelli, Bernacchi, Babbi, la Tesi, la Romanina, Faustina and Cuzzoni; and the elegant *scenes* and *decorations* of the two Bibienas, which had superseded the expensive and childish machinery of the last century. (Burney 1776-89, IV: 561; in Kimbell 1991, 190)[6]

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[5] See Haenen and Comparini 2000, for a discussion of countertenors, castrati and female sopranos.

[6] The singers in Burney's list are: Farinelli (Carlo Broschi) soprano *castrato* (1705-1782); Giovanni Carestini, soprano *castrato* (c.1705-c.1760); Caffarelli (Gaetano Majorano) mezzo-soprano *castrato* (1710-1783); Antonio Maria Bernacchi, *castrato* (1685-1756); Gregorio Babbi, *castrato*; Vittoria Tesi, contralto (1700-1775); Marianna Bulgarelli-Benti (La Romanina), soprano, (1684-1734); Faustina Bordoni, mezzo-soprano (1700-1781); and Francesca Cuzzoni,

Burney's list includes four female singers and six *castrati*, demonstrating that it was the male tenors and basses whose popularity suffered in competition with *castrati* rather than that of female contraltos, mezzos and sopranos.

It was within the scope of the Italian *cinquecento* that women vocalists truly began to come into their own. Compared with only a very few known female musicians from the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, the names and lives of more than 60 female singers whose vocal performances were praised during the sixteenth century are known to us today.[7] Emerging from different spheres of society, many of these women were actors, poets, instrumentalists, patrons or composers as well, and at least half of them can be described as renowned soloists who earned a distinguished reputation for their beautiful voices. In multiple guises and contexts, women sang in sixteenth-century Italy, contributing to the musical culture and social fabric of their immediate and sometimes far-reaching sphere of influence, and bringing the female singer into a prominent recognition of unprecedented historical significance.

To approach the contribution of women to Renaissance music, then, one need not lament the dearth of female composers, but rather focus on the tremendous activity of female performers. As the work of Suzanne Cusick (1994c, 1993), Bonnie Gordon (1999), Linda Austern (1998, 1989), Judith Butler (1990a), and Janelle Reinelt (1989) has pointed out, performance is also indicative of social and, in particular, gender ideologies which inform and proscribe women's self-fashioning and social contribution; thus an investigation of female singers will also reveal much about the formation of gender biases and the role of women in society. In addition, a study of the music performed and patronized by female singers in the sixteenth century will illumine gender associations of specific music genres as well as address women's influence on the development of musical

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soprano (c.1698-1770).

[7] For biographical details and sources for these women vocalists, see appendix I and bibliography. I have not undertaken a detailed search for the names and biographies of male singers, but in the literature I have looked at, the many references to female singers stand out in contrast to a lesser number of male vocal virtuosi.

style and composition.

Since the advent of a socially-grounded musicology in the 1970s, it is no longer possible to divorce musical texts from their historical and political contexts. Music must be seen as a social practice, a ritual that translates into political acts definitive of the culture that produces it. In the last twenty years, musicologists have begun to relinquish what Joseph Kerman calls their mainly "positivistic" work, supplanting a former interest in detailed, philological issues with an investigation of how music is practiced in a social and cultural setting (Kerman 1985, 12). As the idea of music's autonomy from the social and critical world dissolves, and the impact of feminism and cultural theory on music scholarship increases, musicologists have turned to various general interpretive theories, including psychoanalysis, Marxism, and feminism, to name a few, in an attempt to determine what makes music and its activities socially meaningful.

One of the most relevant modern philosophical theories, which as yet has received little attention from musicologists, is found in the "semanalysis" of Julia Kristeva. Rather than examining text or discourse, Kristeva's contemporary semiotics "takes as its object several semiotic practices which it considers as translinguistic; that is, they operate through and across language, while remaining irreducible to its categories as they are presently assigned" (Kristeva 1989, 989). Music can be seen as a semiotic practice, or a union of several semiotic practices which operate through and across musical language and context. Music has significant impact as an experienced whole but loses coherent meaning as it is reduced to its component parts. Kristeva calls this coherence of individual aspects the "ideologeme" of the text.

> The ideologeme is the intersection of a given textual arrangement (a semiotic practice) with the utterances (sequences) that it either assimilates into its own space or to which it refers in the space of exterior texts (semiotic practices). The ideologeme is that intertextual function read as "materialized" at the different structural levels of each text, and which stretches along the entire length of its trajectory, giving it its historical and social coordinates. (Kristeva 1989, 989-990)

Kristeva's definition holds a unique perspective for music. Music can be considered a text or discourse and perceived as an object —a concrete article that exists in the score or alternately the performed sound— whose formal and stylistic arrangement of pitches and rhythms confer meaning and value on the musical unit. Using Kristeva's theory, which in turn draws on Barthes' notion of the "Text," one can view music as a combination of semiotic practices which include not only the music itself in sound and structure, but also various aspects of its social and historical environments at moments of composition, performance and reception. This is not to say that the score or sound of music cannot in itself hold importance for scholars. Viewing music as an ideologeme does not negate its own textual utterance, nor does it merely add another layer of understanding on top of traditional formal analysis. As Kristeva remarks,

> This is not an interpretative step coming after analysis in order to explain "as ideological" what was first "perceived" as "linguistic." The concept of text as ideologeme determines the very procedure of a semiotics that, by studying the text as intertextuality, considers it as such within (the text of) society and history. The ideologeme of a text is the focus where knowing rationality grasps the transformation of utterances (to which the text is irreducible) into a totality (the text) as well as the insertions of this totality into the historical and social text. (Kristeva 1989, 990)

An approach which understands music as a semiotic practice must take into account the intertextuality of its many aspects. These individual "utterances" —culture, historical context, sound, musical form and style, performance, reception— can be examined on their own, but lead to a deeper understanding of the importance of music when treated as a totality within the sphere of the ideologeme.

Informed by the poststructuralist underpinning of Kristeva's semiotics, my approach will address particular questions concerning the construction and representation of gender and identity, socio-musical relationships, and genre distinction as they relate to female performers and women's performance contexts within sixteenth-century Italy. This study applies various critical theories and methodologies, including a Marxist foundation which undergirds an exploration of the socio-economic background of the female singer in chapter one, a psychoanalytic/semiotic examination of the phenomenon of pleasure in hearing the female singing voice, again utilising Kristeva's unique semanalysis, and the application of specific genre theory in the delineation of a performance-based categorization of music genres. Interconnecting these specific analyses, the work is supported throughout by a foundation of feminist theory.

By the close of the most recent decade feminist theories have become more powerful and more prolific, offering multiple semiotic and discursive entry points into an understanding of women and music. The work of several feminist theorists has infused my perception of gender, and holds particular impact on my discussion of women's musical roles. From Luce Irigaray's critique of Lacan, I value the exploration and valorization of sexual *differance* in the formation of subject and self-identity, but retain a need to move beyond her reliance on a power structure of bi-polar opposites which reinstates Freudian polarities and locates the feminine "only within models and laws devised by male subjects . . . [implying] that there are not really two sexes, but only one" (Irigaray 1985, 86). Instead of thinking of gender as a fixed product of male hegemonic structures, one can build on theories of "agency" and "novelty" in which gender is conceived "as a field of experience, socially constructed, constantly changing, not a pair of bi-polar opposites inevitably fixing the subject in relation to an either/or cultural practice" (Reinelt 1989, 51). Kristeva's unique semanalysis and semiotics of the *thetic* —that threshold where the maternal semiotic and paternal symbolic are unified in the signifying process— offers a distinct junction at which both pleasure in music and the idea of woman can be located in terms of the feminine in psychoanalysis; yet we must move beyond her belief in a negative feminist practice which locates women's experience only in the negative representation of men's experience.[8] Teresa de Lauretis offers a new connection between desire and narrative which moves issues of narrative, identification and spectatorship into a psychoanalytic view of semantic and social values. Adding Judith Butler's reassessment of Foucault's multiple configurations of power overturns the "feminine" as a privileged identity and acknowledges the possibility of multiple nuances and combinations of gender. In her 1990 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler also offers a powerful study of the performance of gender as an accumulation of multiple gestures or acts that acquire meaning as they are repeated within ritual social dramas, producing subjectivity and intervening in established discourse; this idea of the performativity of gender and identity holds significant impact for any investigation of performing women. These and other critical and methodological discourses will help us come to terms with the historically coded positions and practices which control the field of social meaning and determine a voice for our female performing subjects.

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[8] Julia Kristeva's now famous quote, "feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists so that we may say 'that's not it' and 'that's still not it'," is exemplary of this tenet of early French feminism which is summed up by Janelle Reinelt as an understanding that women's experience is "not able to be represented at all apart from the sign systems of the prevailing hegemony; in fact, given cultural inscription, it may not even exist *qua* women's experience" (Kristeva 1981, 137; Reinelt 1989, 49).

Approaching the music of the Italian Renaissance from these combined vantage points will allow us to see women's experience in and through the male discourses that form our primary sources. De Lauretis writes,

> The construction of gender goes on . . . through the various technologies of gender . . . and institutional discourses . . . with the power to control the field of social meaning and thus produce, promote, and 'implant' representations of gender. But the terms of a different construction of gender also exist, in the margins of hegemonic discourses. Posed from outside the heterosexual social contract, and inscribed in micropolitical practices, these terms can also have a part in the construction of gender, and their effects are rather at the 'local' level of resistances, in subjectivity and self-representation. (de Lauretis 1987, 18)

Behind the male discourses of musical and poetic text, theoretical debate and literary dialogues, eyewitness descriptions and performance reception, lie the struggles, cooperations, conquests and resistances which converge within these primary sources to produce and promote multiple revelations of women's experience. If we look beyond the written texts and musical scores to women's performance, interpretation, embellishment, patronage and taste, we can see not only a significant musical contribution, but the construction and performance of gender and identity, informed by popular ideas of music and women's place in society. Such an investigation and approach will reveal important insights into not only the changing diversity of historical musical style but also the nature of gender relationships informed by musical composition and performance in Italian Renaissance society.

As a result of the increased interest in feminist musicology and women's historical role in music production, several important studies which address women's performance in sixteenth-century Italy have emerged in recent years: Newcomb's *The Madrigal at Ferrara 1579-1597* (1980), and Feldman's *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice* (1995) include women's musical activities within these comprehensive city-studies; Riley's examination of Tarquinia Molza (Riley 1985), Prizer's investigative work on Isabella d'Este (1993, 1985, 1982), Cusick's biographical sketch and forthcoming study of Francesca Caccini (1994b), Carter's revealing essay about Vittoria Archilei (1999), and Strainchamps' work on Caterina Martinelli (1985) all offer interesting biographical details of performing women, and in several cases link them with important male composers or specific compositions; Cusick (1994c); Gordon (1999), Treadwell (1997) and McClary (1991) focus on specific compositions or performance events which feature female singers. Yet despite the excellent work already begun in the area of female performance in sixteenth-century Italy, questions regarding the continuity and coherence of women's performance practice, the contribution of women musicians to the formation and practice of an enduring, cohesive music genre-system, and the reception and status of female musicians in society still remain to be identified, articulated and answered. This thesis addresses these current deficiencies in music scholarship by exploring the performance practice and repertoire employed by female vocalists throughout the *cinquecento*, and examining how gender relationships were informed by musical performance and reception in Italian Renaissance society, as well as how social perceptions of specific genres contributed to the changing diversity of historical musical style.

In order to more fully comprehend the nature of women's musical contributions, one must first understand the status of women as well as the function of music in the social fabric of sixteenth-century Italy. The first chapter thus explores the socio-economic background of the Renaissance female singer, outlining women's changing social status in sixteenth-century Italy, their involvement in economic, political, educational and cultural systems and structures, and the ideological division of private and public spheres which circumscribed their participation in the same. It also examines the function of music among different classes in view of Renaissance gender ideology which proscribed and dictated women's opportunities for music education, performance, patronage, and composition.

The second section begins a more detailed study of specific social and musical contexts with an examination of women patrons and performers at the turn of the sixteenth century. Throughout the work, biographical investigations of individual women and their musical involvement inform and illumine the study, providing concrete examples which further open up the exploration of gender and music. Thus chapter two examines the function of music in the lives of four northern Italian women of the ruling classes: Marchesa Isabella d'Este of Mantua, Duchess Beatrice d'Este of Milan, Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga of Urbino and Duchess Lucrezia Borgia of Ferrara. Each received musical training as a child and possessed performance skills which ranged from proficient to outstanding. They shared family and cultural traditions of excellence in music, presided over courts where the most renowned scholars, literary men, artists and courtiers gathered, and were connoisseurs and significant patrons of music. While music functioned as a pleasurable pastime in these northern female courts after the fashion described in Baldassar Castiglione's monumental *Il libro di cortegiano* (1528), it also operated according to the differing individual tastes and attentions of these sisters and rivals, granting spiritual consolation, emphasizing ethnic heritage, and advancing the political agendas of these influential leaders and cultural trend-setters. Music also functioned as an integral element in their construction and performance of public identities as *laudibus mulierium*.

In their patronage and performance of specific music types, the northern duchesses were instrumental in developing the earliest written Italian secular vocal music in the form of the *frottola*. Chapter three details the nature of female patronage, explores a duchess's role as mistress of the court and the maker of court culture, and defines the musical genres patronized and performed by women of the court. Because of societal perceptions of gender, a noblewoman's musical involvement was relegated primarily to private, secular genres. It also centered around music for voices and plucked strings—those instruments considered by conventional moral codes to be appropriate for women. Her need for music suited to female performance in a courtly setting yet consistent with the high cultural and intellectual aims of the ruling families and an increasing taste for Italian literature and art resulted in the development of the Italian *frottola* and its emphasis on Petrarchan poetry.

The performance practices begun by the northern duchesses continued throughout the century, exercised by both noble and bourgeois women. As accompanied solo singing was repeatedly performed by women of various classes and circumstances, it was affirmed as a socially meaningful activity particularly associated with women. The reception literature which details psychological and social responses to women's singing is indicative of widespread attitudes toward gender and music which pervaded Italian society and influenced the continued performance of female singers. Although the primary sources of information regarding women's vocal performance in the Renaissance are music, literature and eyewitness accounts written by men, these codices of male hegemonic discourse harbour certain expectations and revelations about women's own attitude toward performance, as well as a performer-listener relationship which involves an experience of pleasure. Chapter four, "Hearing the Female Voice: Some Thoughts on Performance, Spectatorship and Pleasure," examines the phenomenon of pleasure in hearing the female voice which is described in this reception literature. Using a psychoanalytical/semiotic model derived from Julia Kristeva's unique semanalysis, this examination of pleasure in music takes into account the function of the Lacanian pre-symbolic as well as the social space of Renaissance performance, and places musical pleasure and the idealization of woman at the threshold of semiotic drives and symbolic functions. The second half of the chapter focuses on the dual imagery of Siren and Muse found in reception literature, where descriptions of the spiritually transcendent soprano voice and its ability to move the soul of the listener co-exist with images of the seductive performing body. This spiritual/sexual duality reinforces conventional poetic conceits and attaches equally to disparate socio-economic groups of performing women; it also illumines the process whereby the male listener is brought to the threshold of pleasure that is experienced in hearing the female voice.

The mid-sixteenth century saw the continued use of the *frottola* and related genres sung by women of the nobility and upper bourgeoisie in courts, salons, private domestic spaces and intellectual academies and *ridotti*. The widespread custom of singing to lute accompaniment attests to a strong tradition of the Italian lute song, yet current categorizations of musical genres fail to account for this thriving practice. Chapter five problematizes current genre divisions and advances the idea of a performance-based genre-system which situates the Italian lute song as a defining category, encompassing existing formal generic categories while circumventing continuing binaries of sacred/secular and vocal/instrumental which obscure the intrinsic nature and widespread practice of the lute song. In a discussion of genre, Julia Kristeva writes, "one of the problems for semiotics is to replace the former, rhetorical division of genres with a *typology of texts*; that is, to define the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are part and which is in turn, part of them" (Kristeva 1989, 989). Placing the music performed by women of the sixteenth century within the "general text" of their culturally specific performance and reception, illumines the convergence of social, political, economic and musical utterances as a complex intersection of semiotic practices, each of which, revealed at different structural levels, helps to define the practice of music. A performance-based genre-system avoids the biases of scholarship which focuses on manuscript study and publishing conventions and corresponds to Renaissance categorizations of music; it also allows women's contribution to music, which has been obfuscated by an emphasis on male compositional practices, to emerge.

Having established the Italian lute song as an inclusive genre-system and outlined its historical musical and stylistic development through the sixteenth-century, we can then take into account the convergence of social, political, and economic forces, including ideologies of gender, which impacted the practice and progression of this music. Chapter six looks at the increasing identification of the Italian lute song as a woman's genre throughout the mid-sixteenth century. With the advent of *a cappella* madrigal singing and its popularity in Italian academies as a male intellectual and musical pursuit, women's continued performance of accompanied solo song fostered a strong identification of the lute song as a female genre. Women continued to sing at court, but by mid-century examples of women singing in academies, salons and *ridotti* appear, confirming the female lute song's ability to permeate multiple levels of society.

Many of the women who performed in these upper bourgeois intellectual settings were artistically-inclined *gentildonne* like Irene di Spilimbergo, or poets such as Gaspara Stampa and Vittoria Colonna who performed their own verses to lute accompaniment. Some, however, were sophisticated courtesans who used music as one of their essential strategies for self advancement. Famed *cortegiane oneste* like Veronica Franco and Tullia d'Aragona hosted musical evenings in their homes and performed in salons and *ridotti*, cultivating a reputation as women of culture and intellect. The association of the lute song with the Italian courtesan tradition was so strong that by the seventeenth century prostitutes and procuresses carried lutes or were depicted with them as a sign of their profession.[9] The lute song's link to performing courtesans not only reinforced its identification as a woman's genre, but also contributed to the lingering moral stigma attached to performing women of any class.

The final section of this thesis follows women's performance traditions into the late-sixteenth century. Chapter seven briefly outlines the nature and membership of Italy's *concerti di donne* at Ferrara, Mantua, Florence and Rome, drawing primarily on Anthony Newcomb's excellent factual study, *The Madrigal at Ferarra* (1980). It then problematizes the idea of the "professional" female singer, examining the changing status of the performing court musician in light of women's employment status, social position and musical expertise. In an article included in the collection *Women Making Music*, as well as in the above mentioned monograph, Newcomb describes the singers at the court of Ferrara as "professional" musicians, indicative of "a rapid and dramatic change" in the status of "the participation of women in professional music-making" (Newcomb 1987, 93). Newcomb's study of female singers at the court of Ferrara is the most detailed and perceptive to date; yet the conclusions he draws about women's entry into the sphere of

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[9] See Zecher 2000, 774.

"professional music-making" are somewhat one-sided. Newcomb describes the members of the *concerto delle donne* as "early examples of the highly prestigious professional woman musician" (1987, 94), and suggests that "by 1600 . . . a woman could actually aim for a career in music (or be aimed there by an ambitious relative) as an alternative to a career as an unpaid handmaiden of the Church or as the manager of her husband's household" (1987, 93). Unfortunately Newcomb's study fails to account for the complexity of women's musical and social roles in early modern Italy.

My investigation swiftly reveals that the issue is not as uncomplicated or clear cut as Newcomb proposes. Not only were women active in so-called 'professional' music making since the early Middle Ages, but the very nature of singing as a 'profession' must be called into question for musicians of either gender, and is complicated by issues of class and economics. The female *virtuosi* of the late *cinquecento* displayed a professional attitude toward singing through their extensive training, long hours of rehearsal and regular performances; they also received monetary and material reward for their services to princes and duchesses. Yet employment records and surviving letters indicate that they were thought of and treated not as professional musicians, but as ladies of the female court. In addition, contemporary responses to the *concerti di donne* demonstrate that these highly admired vocalists were viewed as anomalies —musical wonders— or women overstepping their natural place. In the sixteenth century they were not seen as a new class of professional women or proof of woman's equal artistic ability and temperament, but as aberrations of the natural social order.

The popularity of female singers had, by the late sixteenth-century, reached an unprecedented height; the widespread renown and increased numbers of performing women held significant consequences for the development of secular vocal music. Chapter eight outlines the impact of these highly competent virtuosi, and the gender ideology which informed their performance, on the development of madrigal style. The inclusion of lighter genres connected with the female lute song and development of the hybrid canzonetta-madrigal, an emphasis on high tessituras which pervaded late sixteenth-century vocal music, the development of concerted texture and female ensemble singing, and the creation and performance of vocal diminution —an integral element of the luxuriant madrigal which also influenced music of the *seconda prattica*— can all be attributed in some part to the creative contribution and influence of female vocalists at Ferrara, Mantua, Florence and Rome.

The women vocalists of the late *cinquecento* brought the century to a close with a flourish of female virtuosity. In so doing, they completed the pattern established by the northern duchesses at the beginning of the century, and continued by court ladies, bourgeois wives and daughters and intellectual courtesans throughout sixteenth-centuy Italy, proving that indeed music "is a very useful virtue in ladies in this our age" (Isabella d'Este to Anna d'Alençon, letter of December 11, 1517; in Prizer 1999, 10). A knowledge of the performance, patronage, and reception of these remarkable women augments current views of music history as a stylistic development and redefines our understanding of music both as a social experience and as sound.

Chapter I

The Renaissance Female Singer — Social Change and Class Attitudes

In the complex transition from the feudal Middle Ages to the early modern capitalist society of the Italian city-states, both the function and practice of music and the role of women in society were affected by economic and social change. No longer fully defined by three feudal estates, the region of Italy comprised a convoluted social stratification. An enduring feudal aristocracy mixed with wealthy merchant rulers, a rising bourgeois population including the upper middle class *popolo grasso*, along with the self-employed labourers and craftsmen who formed a petty bourgeoisie known as the *popolo minuto*, and a transformed proletariat working class of urbanized peasants who worked as unskilled or semiskilled labourers, not so far removed from their agricultural cousins. Through these shifting layers of social identity, the function and style of music and the social role of musicians varied dramatically from one social, intellectual and economic situation to another.

In the specific examples of performing women that form the scope of this study we move through these unstable social realms from court to courtesan, and from domestic privacy to the public stage. In each case the practice of music, mode of performance and response to the singer is specific to the social situation, a factor which in its very multiplicity reveals much about the complex socioeconomic position of Renaissance women musicians. Yet in order to understand these specific performance contexts we must first position both music and woman within the broader background of contemporary attitudes and social and economic change which characterized the Italian *cinquecento*. This chapter will first examine woman's changing role in economic, political, educational and cultural spheres; next, it will position the practice and function of music within class structure. From this dual vantage point we can then begin to outline the nature and position of the Renaissance female singer.

Women's Changing Social Status

Within the emerging capitalist society of sixteenth-century Italy, women were, as they have been throughout history, a distinctive social group, shaped by general changes in mode of production, along with changing formations of social thought regarding a sexual division of labour. Although, as Elizabeth Grosz points out in her critique of feminist methodologies, there is an inherent danger in assuming that women are a largely homogenous group with shared experiences and perspectives, there are some common elements —informed by ideological restrictions and ideals— in the social situation of Renaissance women, especially those of bourgeois and noble status (Grosz 1995, 15).

Following the example of nineteenth-century historian Jacob Burckhardt, who placed Renaissance women "on a footing of perfect equality with men" (Burckhardt 1999, 240), historians have often assumed that the freedom and power of women increased in the Renaissance along with the freedom and power of bourgeois and proletariat men.[1] However, in many situations women's economic, political and familial independence became severely limited. Even the concept of freedom differed between genders; Merry E. Wiesner observes that for male humanist writers, "freedom" had an esoteric meaning which involved "enjoying the rights and privileges of a citizen and possessing an educated capacity for reason" (Wiesner 1986, 3), while for women the word connoted a much more tangible liberty —to make life decisions for oneself, including the decision to participate in some sort of public life. "Widows, working women, writers, medical practitioners, midwives, and female religious thinkers," writes Wiesner, all defined this 'public role' somewhat differently: "for some, it was the ability to bring their own suits to court; for others, the right to keep operating a shop, to use skills they had mastered, or to support their families or defend their church; for still others, the opportunity to write something that would be remembered forever" (Wiesner 1986, 22). The fact that so many women argued to obtain this freedom demonstrates how commonly and universally it was denied.

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[1] Historian John Hale, for example, blithely insists that "in the liberal spirit of the Renaissance, women of aristocratic families were accorded new respect and greater opportunities"; yet he continues to judge women's "opportunities" by the circumscribing domestic measure accorded by her patrician contemporaries, admitting as proof of the "new respect" for women, that while only "some received the classical education given to their brothers . . . all were brought up to be good mothers" (Hale 1965, 175).

Throughout this period the increased exclusion of women from two major economic activities, control of property and productive labour, constituted the most important factor in increasing sexual and social inequalities. Women continued to lose control over property, products and themselves, as legal and economic restrictions affected women's power to make financial decisions and to handle their own property. An increasing variety of municipal and regional laws limited women's ability to make wills, be witnesses, act as guardians to their children, represent themselves in court and oversee their finances. Women's power over property declined as social trends phased out a daughter's inheritance in favour of increased dowries: Francesco Ercole shows that during the fourteenth century the legal distinction between a woman's dowry (*patrimonio dotale*) which became her husband's property until his death (unless otherwise stated in his will) and her *paraphernalia* —those properties or inheritances that she brought into her marriage but remained in control of— disappeared in many regions of Italy, leaving a woman unable to control any property of her own unless specifically willed to her by father or husband and agreed upon by both families (in Cohn 1996, 54).

This economic shift is directly related to the emergence of a wealthy mercantile ruling class which rivalled and in many cases subsumed the enduring older nobility, and the desire of the new aristocratic elite to define themselves through an authoritative link to heredity, virtue and statesmanship. Samuel Cohn observes that "those societies where lineage and the zeal to preserve one's name and the memory of one's ancestors were strongest were also the cities where women's power over property was weaker and where their rights over the most basic economic and social resource—their dowry—was in jeopardy" (Cohn 1996, 55). The firm establishment of patriarchal control over property emanated from the attempts of emerging and entrenched oligarchies to gain and keep political and social hegemony amid the economic prosperity and political turbulence of fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Italy.

Along with their control of property, women's participation in the work force also declined during the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Wiesner cites the rise of journeyman's guilds which generally excluded women, the growth of new manufacturing centres, the formalization of training requirements and the rise of capitalism as just some of the factors that led to a restriction of women's work (Wiesner 1986, 5-9). While mapping growing trends of limitations placed on women's economic and political freedom, it is important to note that women's participation in the paid labour force varied according to city, region, class, industry and year. Examples from fifteenth-century Florence, Paris and York, for instance, find women in occupations requiring heavy physical exertions, specialized skills, or attachment to a guild—not just spinning and domestic service. Samuel Cohn reminds us that "women were not completely cut off from the world of property, merchandise and trade" (Cohn 1998, 116); yet in almost every industry a woman would typically earn less than half the amount of a man for equal labour. The generalized decline of women's legal and labour freedom may not have occurred evenly and continuously across Europe, but men "dominated the world of capital and business" and women were ever more frequently excluded from that world (Cohn 1998, 116).

Women's unpaid societal roles, from service at court or helping in the family business, to childbearing and rearing can also be seen as part of economic activity. Both feminist scholarship and Marxist economic history have argued persuasively that paid work and other economic activities cannot be separated from the family and domestic labour; this is especially relevant in the updated feudal society of Renaissance Italy where in many cases the household still serves as a centre of production which involves the entire family, even though only the recognized patriarchal head of that household might receive profit from their labour, be taxed accordingly, and mediate their product in the market or business place. An unmarried or widowed woman attempting to sustain herself outside the economic unit of the family household might find work as a domestic servant or spinster, while within the household a woman could work alongside her father or husband, contributing to the economic survival of the whole family.

In a familial arrangement, especially among the lower classes, the actual work of women and men might be quite similar; however, their work identity —the social and personal meaning derived from that work— remained different. While a man's social identity was tied to his work through stages of specialized training, acceptance into organized guilds, relationships formed within the industry related to his age, along with his class and economic status, a woman's identity was derived from social events such as marriage, motherhood and widowhood, as well as her age and class. The family unit, more than the work performed within it, accorded significance to her labour, and contributed to the formation of her social identity.

Joan Kelly attributes what she saw as the "subordination of women to the interests of husbands and male-dominated kin groups" to a "new division between personal and public life" (1999, 45). The public/domestic male/female dichotomy has become central to feminist political theory and to the broader field of women's studies, from Marxist feminist analyses of the sexual division of labour, to socio-historical explorations of women's cultural and political contributions.[2] However, the definition of the public sphere remains ambiguous or at best heterogenous, and the popular application of this indefinite dichotomy to a specific historiographical study can quickly become problematic. The separation of the public male domain and the domestic women's realm has been seen as a "historical phenomenon . . . that is integrally related to the formation of the wage labor force and the concentration of production in capitalist firms" (Davis 1997, 93); yet to define the public sphere as the realm of paid employment impedes the application of this theory to transitional Italian city-states where pre-capitalist economic patterns such as the feudal court still operate alongside emerging urban capitalist trends, and wage labour was essentially a new phenomenon. Moreover, the division between public work and private domesticity is easily obscured when one realizes that the Renaissance household as a legal and economic unit is still the location of most production, therefore setting this private domestic space within the public sphere of productive labour.[3] Defining the public sphere in terms of political and legislative authority is also problematic for it entails class biases as well as gender divisions: not only women, but also men of the wrong class, family, age or economic status, were excluded from holding public office, while women of the ruling families were known to accept governmental positions.

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[2] See Armstrong, Armstrong, Connelly and Miles, 1985, for the separation of home and workplace in a dialogue between Marxism and feminism; for an overview of approaches to historical and contemporary divisions of public and domestic spheres, see Sharistanian 1986.

A combined definition of the public sphere as a political and business administrative space not only encompasses the preceding two problematic areas, but also is more in line with a Renaissance understanding of the same. Bourgeois humanist writers like Leon Battista Alberti often discuss the division of civic and domestic responsibilities within middle class households. On dividing the management of a Florentine bourgeois household between a husband and wife, Alberti gives Gianozzo, the wise, aged interlocutor of *Il Libro Della Famiglia* (c.1434), the following words:

> Let the father of the family follow my example. Since I find it no easy matter to deal with the needs of the household when I must often be engaged outside with other men in arranging matters of wider consequence, I have found it wise to set aside a certain amount for outside use, for investments and purchases. The rest, which takes care of all the smaller household affairs, I leave to my wife's care. I have done it this way, for, to tell the truth, it would hardly win us respect if our wife busied herself among the men in the marketplace, out in the public eye. It also seems somewhat demeaning to me to remain shut up in the house among women when I have manly things to do among men, fellow citizens and worthy and distinguished foreigners. (Alberti 1994, 77)

Here Alberti gives us a clear picture of the division of male and female household responsibilities which correspond with a delineation of domestic and public space.

The division of public and private was predominantly situated in the middle classes: economic growth among the emerging bourgeoisie of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries fostered the "development of [a] civic life" which, as Burckhardt describes, placed "noble and burgher . . . on equal terms" (Burckhardt 1999, 107). Many fundamental changes in the social function and perception of women stemmed from the humanist thought and economic changes which were shaping this new bourgeois class. In response to a growing prosperity of the middle classes and women's exclusion from productive labour and political participation outside of the household, "time spent by middle class women on domestic tasks expanded" (Wiesner 1993, 60). As Wiesner notes, the sixteenth century saw an increased emphasis on domestic status symbols among the lower classes such as glass windows, stone (instead of dirt) floors, and several courses at dinner, and economic virtues such as industriousness and thrift were added to a growing list of wifely virtues (Wiesner 1993, 60). By the sixteenth century, the division of public/civic and private/domestic was noticeable in social and political practices and intellectual writings, particularly as they applied to women. Bourgeois writings on education, domestic life and society support a denial of women's independence and "sharply distinguish an inferior domestic realm of women from the superior public realm of men" (Kelly 1984, 21). Popular authors such as Leon Battista Alberti (*I Libri della famiglia*, 1434) and Matteo Palmieri (*Della vita civile*, 1526) promoted the new ideology which advocated dignity and restraint within the home, and public service outside it. Such treatises defining women's space and behaviour fostered the divergence of public and private spheres which had begun in the fourteenth century.

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[3] This is particularly true, for instance, in the complex *famiglia* of a city-dwelling merchant or landlord which included resident apprentices and sons along with their wives and children, or peasant share-croppers whose labour worth increased and taxes decreased with an extended family living under one roof. Interestingly, modern studies of the Florentine *Catasto* of 1427-30 show that households of the urban poor, artists and the *popolo minuto* typically included only one conjugal family (Klapisch-Zuber 1985).

In addition, it appears that the separation of this public world of men from the closed domestic space of the woman functioned most strongly in bourgeois patrician societies, such as were found in Florence, Venice and Genoa. Though Wiesner glosses over the whole of Italy when she comments that "in comparing the Italian situation with that of northern Europe, one is struck by how much earlier a sharp division between public and private was made in Italy," she nevertheless focuses her specific investigation on Tuscany, and observes along with a 1610 Florentine commentator that "in Florence women are more enclosed than in any other part of Italy; they see the world only from the small openings in their windows" (Wiesner 1986, 25; fn. 29). Among the patrician bourgeoisie of republics such as Florence and Genoa, patriarchal views in writings on marriage and the family confine women to the home and advocate ideals of chastity and motherhood as female virtues. Handbooks and moral guides for ladies, of which Ruth Kelso has surveyed 891 in her study, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, reaffirm this view of women's education, pointing them to domestic duties and leisure activities and advocating the conventional 'moral' virtues of chastity, obedience, meekness, beauty, spirituality and devotion to family interests.

These bourgeois virtues were made even more respectable by neo-Petrarchan humanist writers like Leonardo Bruni and Pietro Bembo who associated them in opposition to public, male virtues such as courage, loyalty and good statesmanship, with the political and economic development of ancient Rome. Petrarch's ideal man, who combined the opposing virtues of self-containment and public-spiritedness, began as merely a philosophy; but only a short time later, treatises such as Pier Paolo Vergerio's *De ingenuis moribus* (1404) codified these philosophical views into an educational system which would not only produce scholars but also "develop character and prepare children for a busy and competitive life in the world of men and affairs" (Hale 2000, 54), further segregating the domestic sphere to which women were now relegated.

Among the aristocracy, and especially within the ruling families, the distinction between state and home, public and private, was more abstruse. The private household or *famiglia* of a wealthy noble family was made up of hundreds of servants, advisors, courtiers and visiting ambassadors as well as the central nuclear family. In addition, the intricate kin connections —confirmed by inheritance, marriage and the conveyance of land or benefices— between the main branch (*ramo*) of a ruling family and the related lesser noble houses (*casa*), served to consolidate wealth and power within the wider clans of the ruling Italians. Giorgio Chittolini sees Renaissance Italy as "a political structure formulated in terms of lineages, factions, and groups, organized on the basis of systems of relations and mechanisms of power that are private in nature," that is, upon complex familial relationships (in Chojnacki 1998, 64). Within these interconnected oligarchies, and perhaps because of the indeterminate demarcation of private and public within noble households, the aristocratic woman had more opportunities for political involvement and public participation than her bourgeois sisters.

Jean Brink comments that where "the privileges of class and property were hereditary . . . some women seized power or were thrust into powerful positions" (Brink 1989, 93). The key to women's political opportunity lay as much in the form of government practiced in each political region as in class distinction. In patrician republics such as Florence, Venice and Genoa, women of even noble families were heavily guarded from public administrative roles. But where private and public converged in the still-feudal court systems of the northern city-states —Ferrara, Mantua, Urbino and Milan, for example— women possessed a greater access to political influence. In his essay on "Society, Court and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Mantua," David Herlihy observes this same distinction in the northern Italian courts:

> The conflation of public and private service had one important social result. It gave women a prominence in public and social life they might not otherwise have obtained. Women could not ordinarily aspire to careers as bureaucrats or public officials, but they were traditionally the dominant figures in domestic affairs and in the management of the household and family. In republics such as Venice, or even at Florence in the fifteenth century, women, excluded from the high bureaucratic circles, played a minimal role in public life. Where, on the other hand, household management and public administration were merged, women acquired full social visibility and much influence, even in the conduct of public affairs. (Herlihy 1995, 289).

Yet despite the opportunities afforded by feudal court governance, even women within the ruling elite were normally excluded from such functions as governing and defending domains, controlling estate finances and educating children, more so in the Renaissance than they had been in the Middle Ages. Kelly explains this transition from the feudal Middle Ages to what she calls a "proto-capitalist" Renaissance, declaring that "as the military, financial and juridical powers of feudal families became 'public,' that is, state functions, men moved into the new positions of state control—and the male conception of ladylike behavior assumed its more modern form" (Kelly 1984, 86). One reason that the exercise of political power by women was more rare in the Renaissance than in the Middle Ages is found in the Salic Law of 1328 removing women from inheritance of the French crown, a law which set an example for the European nobility and supported a growing trend away from granting women inheritances of land or political rule.

Despite changing laws and attitudes, there were politically active women in governing roles within Italy: Giovanna I and II, queens of Naples and Sicily in 1343 and 1414, for instance, were the legitimate willed heirs of their father and brother. Wives or even daughters of rulers governed during a husband's or father's absence or acted as regent for a young heir. Caterina Sforza, for instance, ruled the state of Pesaro after her husband's assassination, holding the city of Forli from 1490-1500 by force and determination (and with her Uncle Lodovico, the duke of Milan's assistance). Lucrezia Borgia was given the political post of Governor of Spoleto by her father, Pope Alexander VI, and even governed the Vatican during his tours of the Papal states; later as Duchess of Ferrara she regularly governed the duchy during her husband Alfonso I's frequent absences. The preceding duchess of Ferrara, Eleanor of Aragon, assumed sole command of the city when it was besieged by Venice in the war of 1482-84, and her daughter, Isabella d'Este, the Marchesa of Mantua, was well-known to be a clever and calculating ruler, as she proved during the wars of 1509-11 when she made alliances with the French on one side of the river Po while supporting the Pontifical-Venetian army on the other. Yet even noblewomen of the Este, Gonzaga, Sforza and Montefeltro families who were renowned for their "education" and "political wisdom" (Benson 1992, 34), held only provisional and indirect access to political power, through their relationship to the ruling male; and the examples of politically active noblewomen seem to dwindle in the sixteenth century.

As with politically active men, a woman's political involvement depended less on personal inclination than on wealth and family status. For women as for men, power pivoted on a relationship with the ruling prince. A daughter, wife or mother of a prince or duke might hold some degree of political authority through government postings (for example, Lucrezia Borgia acted as chair of the Commission for the Examination of Citizen's Positions in Ferrara), she might exercise greater power through governing a realm in her husband's absence, or she might be sought after as someone who could control or influence the reigning monarch. A wealthy woman could even indirectly participate in war through support of an army or purchase of mercenaries: Lucrezia Borgia sent 1000 infantrymen and 150 crossbowmen under the command of the Spaniard Pedro Ramirez to her brother Cesare during his waning defence of Romagna against the Venetian invasion of 1503. In every situation, though, her gender dictated her access to power as well as her use of it.

Only women of the very highest rank could hope to make some political contribution to the Italian states. For lesser noblewomen, without the wealth or family connections to marry directly into the ruling families, a political role or government post was completely unavailable. A court lady might find some power in a position within a princess' or duchess' household, where she could perhaps use her influence to gain a favourable government, military or church posting for a husband or brother. For these lower aristocrats associated with the great courts, woman's role devolved into one of personal, domestic and recreational service to the duchess, as well as attention to her own family matters.

The generalized loss of independent power and social status that fell upon the lesser noble class was, however, not reserved for women alone, but affected both genders, and had devastating consequences for the lesser nobleman. While many bourgeois men were enjoying radical new freedoms and opportunities, the status of the male aristocrat became increasingly precarious; without "the independent political powers of feudal jurisdiction nor legally guaranteed status in the ruling estate" the Renaissance knight "either served a despot or became one" (Kelly 1984, 31). The loss of feudal holdings meant the loss of any real power for the aristocrat as his role devolved into one of military service and companionship to the Prince. Agostino Nifo's *De re aulica* (1524) lowers the courtier's status even further, defining him as "a person existing only to lighten the leisure hours of his lord" (in Kelso 1956, 212), thus assigning the courtier a decorative position usually occupied by ladies.[4] In *I libri della famiglia*, Alberti corroborates this derogatory posture, stating that "the majority of courtiers live in idleness and waste their time," and such "idle creatures . . . lack a masculine and glorious spirit. They are contemptible in their apparent inclination to play the part of women rather than that of men" (Alberti 1994, 107 & 78). The courtier's diminished status in relation to the princely or patrician ruler equalled a woman's posture of dependency upon her lord. As Ruth Kelso concludes after examining the evidence of this hierarchy in her study of handbooks for ladies and courtiers, "there is no meaning to the idea of a lady as a courtier except with reference to the gentleman as a courtier, just as there is no meaning to the idea of a courtier except with reference to a prince" (Kelso 1956, 213).

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[4] Nifo's Latin text was translated into Italian in 1560 and widely distributed under the title *Il Cortegiano del Sessa*.

Only in the southern republics did a courtier have equal chance along with new citizens to gain power through council and government positions, and only for a limited time. By the mid-sixteenth century, Italy was a collection of sovereign states, bourgeois republics and *signorie* ruled by local despots. Several of these city-states, Siena and Genoa for example, had gone through periods of revolution and bourgeois or even working-class rule, but were now forced by economic or political circumstances to resign councils elected by citizens and to accept hereditary rule by princes. These new ruling courts were dominated by aristocratic families, occasionally of ancient noble birth, but more often 'aristocratized' merchants and businessmen who either relied on their own wealth, were allied with or annexed to stronger states, or received the backing and protection of the French, Spanish and Neapolitan kings, the German Emperor, or the Pope.[5]

In response to ongoing political and economic changes, important educational and cultural changes occurred which altered women's functional roles, both at court and in the bourgeois households that simultaneously imitated and influenced courtly society.

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[5] By the sixteenth century, the states of Italy included such diverse governmental systems as: the monarchy of Naples (ruled by the Spanish house of Aragon); the republic of Venice, headed by the Doge and governed by a Great Council, Senate and Collegio; the nominal republic of Florence, ruled by the Medici family; the constantly shifting Papal states, governed from far-reaching Rome by the Pope; the duchies of Milan, Ferrara, Mantua, and Urbino, ruled by the interwoven families of the Sforzas, Estes, Gonzagas and Montefeltros who held their states as Papal vicars; despot-controlled *signori* like Rimini, Faenza, Imola, Forli; and the nominal republic of Genoa, ruled by fluctuating aristocracy in conjunction with a French Governor.

Education directed women toward domestic cultural and social activities, and away from political, scientific, legal or economic studies. By the late-fourteenth century, riding and weaponry had generally been dropped from a lady's education, and as her role became increasingly decorative, her primary occupation turned toward entertainment and leisure. Women remained strong supporters of the arts, and crafts and fine arts such as needlework and music remained standard components of female education: indeed, as Hale remarks, "the wellborn woman raised leisure to an art" (Hale 1965, 175). Beyond these decorative accomplishments, women would be given a religious education —in some families a girl would be allowed to read only from religious texts— and taught to manage a household with thrift and decorum. Merry Wiesner notes that "girls of all classes were taught skills that they would use in running a household—spinning, sewing, cooking, care of domestic animals; peasant girls were also taught some types of agricultural tasks" (Wiesner 1993, 43). This generalized pattern of female education was particularly followed in aristocratic and upper bourgeois families, where education was furnished by paid tutors, mothers or other ladies of the household, or in convent schools. For the urban working classes and rural poor, any education, regardless of the gender of the child, took place at a young age at the hands of their mothers; instead of advancing to city schools or convents, these children undertook years of service in another household for little or no income, which usually ended in apprenticeship (for boys) or marriage (for girls).

Exceptions can be found to the general pattern of women's education, especially in several of the ruling families, where the wealth and indulgence of their parents allowed daughters to undertake a more liberal humanist education alongside their brothers. Noblewomen often acquired Latin literacy and learned speech making, and Isabella and Beatrice d'Este even learned to ride and hunt (both with falcons and dogs) while still in their girlhood at Ferrara. If noblewomen were afforded a humanist education, learning Latin, Greek and other languages, as well as rhetoric, logic and even mathematics, it was not necessarily, as in the case of their brothers, to prepare them for an active public life, but to increase their skill of conversation so that they might more easily entertain important guests. In 1420 the Ferrarese humanist educator Leonardo Bruni defended the education of women, arguing that learning would not make the role of his female students more public, but would rather become a sign of cultivation (in Benson 1992, 34). A girl's education displayed the wealth and rank of her family and added to her marriageability. Each of the accomplishments provided by a woman's education "satisfactorily connote[d] a leisured life, a background which regards the decorative as adding lustre to rank and social standing, and the ability to purchase the services of the best available teacher for such comparatively useless skills" (Grafton & Jardine 1986, 56-57).

Upon her marriage, a woman's learning and artistic ability was seen as a crowning ornament of the prince's power; yet her achievements were not accredited solely to her husband's court. Because of the political nature of most high-ranking marriages, a husband and wife could maintain very separate lives, and they maintained separate courts as well. Depending on her income and her husband's interest in controlling her, a woman's court was her own construction. Duchesses and princesses such as Lucrezia Borgia and Elisabetta Gonzaga, as well as wealthy noble or bourgeois women like Cecelia Gallerini, mistress to Duke Ludovico Sforza, poets Vittoria Colonna or Gaspara Stampa, or courtesan Veronica Franco, set up their own courts or salons where poets, artists, musicians and humanist scholars gathered. In each case the lady's education and artistic taste contributed to the establishment of rich humanist and artistic circles, renowned for their high level of intellect, culture and elegance.

Even in the education and upbringing of children women's involvement diminished, especially among the bourgeoisie. According to Kelly, although women still functioned in "the maintenance and production of new members of the social order," they did so as "the property of men" (Kelly 1984, 12). While her procreative role was revered, the socializing function of woman became more and more relegated to her offspring of the same gender, while the education of male children was taken over by the state and the church. Jacob Burckhardt observes that "the increase of wealth rendered a more systematic care for education possible" (Burckhardt 1999, 125); wealthy patrons contributed to the private funding of universities and the establishment of schools for noble children or gifted poorer boys, such as those set up by Vittorino da Feltre at Mantua and Guarino da Verona at Ferrara. With humanist curriculums centered upon Greek and Roman classics, and only a very few privileged women possessing such education themselves, the amount of direct involvement a woman would have in the education and upbringing of (at least male) children was considerably reduced from her role as the primary care-giver and educator in a Medieval family.

Of the bourgeois patrician family in late fifteenth-century Florence, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber notes that children of both sexes were educated at home by women in the "family gynaceum" only during their very early years (1985, 108-109). From about age seven girls were commonly sent to convents for schooling until a dowry was amassed and a marriage arranged (around fourteen years of age), or for eventual religious life (a girl would take the veil between the ages of nine and thirteen). Boys were sent to secular schools, *scuole di grammatica*, around age eight or nine until age fifteen or sixteen. After this they could choose university or learn a business, either from a master-merchant or in one of the specialized business schools called *botteghuzze* which had replaced the traditional paternal shop or *bottega.*

Interestingly, bourgeois mothers may have had more contact with their male children due to the contrast in schooling trends. Since the grammatical *scuola* might take the form of a day school, boys "remained much more rooted in their family during their years of schooling," while their sisters were in residence at a convent (Klapisch-Zuber 1985, 109). Klapisch-Zuber notes that "separation during childhood seems to be all the more marked among girls because their marriage at a still tender age cut them off from their family definitively, while the course of the domestic cycle kept young men dependent longer on the household into which they were born" (1985, 109). Only within the elite of the ruling class —in families that procured the best humanist thinkers to teach their children rather than send them to a court or cathedral school— would a mother maintain a detailed involvement in (or at least a cursory supervision of) her children's education. For example, Isabella d'Este herself engaged tutors for both her son Federico and daughter Leonora, and was involved to the point of ordering specific child-size lutes and viols for their music education.

Within cultural spheres, Italian women of the ruling classes set standards for style and taste which were duplicated in upper and middle class society throughout Europe. The prevalence of amateur female musicians and women patrons of the arts seems to remain steady from Medieval times across Europe: carrying on in the tradition of Eleanor of Acquitaine, Marie de Champagne, Blanche of Castile and Margaret of Burgundy (to name only a few Medieval patrons), we now see Louise of Savoy, Eleanora d'Aragona, Isabella and Beatrice d'Este, Lucrezia Borgia, Elisabetta Gonzaga, Renée de France, and Margherita Gonzaga d'Este, among others, supporting music and poetry. Noblewomen regularly employed musicians, organized musical productions, commissioned specific works, accepted dedications from poets and composers, and even participated in court performances. These Renaissance women still lend their name to continuing artistic patronage, echoing the control of cultural production which operated in the courts of leisure and romance created by the Provençal Eleanor and her French daughters.

Joan Kelly believes that women's influence over courtly cultural affairs and society declined as humanist educators "suppressed romance and chivalry to further classical culture" (Kelly 1984, 55); yet the early sixteenth century hailed the courts of the ruling duchesses as highly influential cultural spheres, and praised the intellectual and artistic accomplishments of the women who ruled over them. However, these Renaissance courts, while echoing the Medieval model exemplified by Marie de Champagne's court of love, where ladies passed judgement on specific situations and topics dealing with love and manners, were altered to accommodate humanist ideals and classical virtues such as induced the Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga of Urbino, for instance, who is exemplified in Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano,* to set a more reserved example, allowing her male courtiers to take the most active part in the discussions.

Courtly literature such as Castiglione's immensely popular book exhibit changes from their Medieval predecessors which reflect a hegemonic shift in the Renaissance woman's social status. Among the nobility of the petty despotic states of Italy, especially in the northern courts, many of the customs of Feudal aristocracy, including the traditions of Medieval courtly literature and *fin' amors*, remained in practice. Yet where courtly literature deals with manners, love and the education of women, the Medieval convention was modified by such highly influential writers as Dante, Petrarch and Castiglione to reflect the shifting relationship of women and men in Renaissance courts. The Medieval model exemplified a lady who holds the love of a knight as a lord would hold the service of his vassal; but as if in reflection of women's reduced access to any real political power, the lady's role of 'lord' to her vassal-lover disappeared entirely from Renaissance courtly literature. The image of the courtly lady devolves from this political image to one in which she is either merely an ornament to her male counterpart, the courtier, or an idealized but untouchable spiritual beauty.

An ideological change towards women's sexual activity, brought on by new humanist ideals and bourgeois social divisions, is also reflected in popular courtly literature. Although aspects of Medieval chivalry remained on the cultural surface of the Renaissance court, the feudal practice of social and sexual parity between the sexes was clouded and eventually negated. Whereas the Medieval ideal of courtly love places aristocratic men and women on a near-equal footing regarding the physical expression of love as a sexual relationship outside of marriage, Renaissance ideals replace this image of the courtly lady with a heightened idealization of her beauty, chastity and faithfulness. The change in poetic sensibility is linked to a new concern for legitimacy, emphasized after 1527 by the regulation of membership in the hereditary aristocratic class through the laws of Charles V, and a renewed emphasis on women's chastity (especially before marriage) and motherhood.

Chastity, within and outside of marriage, quickly came to be celebrated as the highest virtue attainable for women; it tops the list of noble attributes in every encomium praising worthy women. Joan Kelly finds this new standard reinforced by Renaissance courtly literature, especially the ever-popular poetry of Dante and Petrarch, and the more contemporary writings of Vittoria Colonna and Baldassare Castiglione. "For women," Kelly writes, "chastity had become the convention of the Renaissance courts, signaling the twofold fact that the dominant institutions of sixteenth-century Italian society would not support the adulterous sexuality of courtly love, and that women, suffering a relative loss of power within these institutions, could not at first make them responsive to their needs . . . the norm of female chastity came to express the concerns of Renaissance noblemen as they moved into a new situation as a hereditary, dependent class" (Kelly 1999, 41). Yet women were viewed as inherently sexual beings with limited control over their own sexual appetites, a state which augured the necessity for their dangerous sexuality to be controlled by others. According to Wiesner, "all early modern societies attempted to control sexual behavior through a variety of means, from secular and church courts to popular rituals designed to humiliate those perceived as deviant" (Wiesner 1993, 49).

The fear of uncontrolled female sexuality further relegated women to the private world of the home and lent associations of immorality to a woman's display of body, work or voice before any audience beyond her own family —especially her appearance in public places such as marketplace, civic administration or theatre. A psychological coupling of negative female sexuality with women's appearance and voice had significant impact on female vocal performance. Combined with increasing restrictions on women's participation in public life, this ideological emphasis on women's virtue and chastity came to have important consequences for female musicians. Music education (often from a male teacher), the male direction and management of female singing ensembles, women's public or semi-private performance, their participation at court or on the stage would all be linked to their sexual and marital status and would greatly influence the manner in which they were received and treated.

Music and Class

In his chapter entitled "Music and Society" from *The Renaissance from the 1470s to the End of the Sixteenth Century,* Iain Fenlon places particular emphasis on the changing structure and needs of Renaissance society and their influence on music. The economic, political, educational and cultural changes of the Italian *cinquecento*, informed by bourgeois humanist thought, did have immense impact on the function and style of music. But the music produced and consumed in the sixteenth century also varied among the divergent classes within Renaissance social structure. Music, especially secular music, met different needs in aristocratic, bourgeois and proletariat circles; and its function varied with the gender and wealth of the individual musician or consumer. Class, gender, age, wealth and social position would determine an individual's involvement with musical education, performance, composition, and patronage. The socioeconomic changes which affected woman's role in Renaissance society also affected her participation in secular music making.

For the Italian ruling classes, whether in an established feudal holding, new republic, or the autocratic principality of a rising despot, the function of the arts remained largely the same in the Renaissance as in the Middle Ages. Music, art and learning were reflections of the political power and economic prosperity that allowed the first two estates (the church and the nobility), along with the emerging bourgeoisie, enough leisure time to pursue the arts and sciences. Music was an essential part of the cultural production which contributed to a perception of power and superiority of the ruling class; it signified an "intellectual and moral leadership" —one of two ways in which "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself" (Gramsci 1971, 57-58). As such, musical performance was a necessary commodity to be purchased and in some cases practiced by the rulers of the Italian states.

As well as demonstrating the power and wealth to purchase culture, members of the ruling classes could contribute to a sense of intellectual superiority by personal participation in the arts. Those who chose excessive display of their talents, however, were not always highly revered, since through public performance they aligned themselves with musicians of a lower social station whose poorer economic circumstances forced them to perform for remuneration. Prince Gesualdo, for example, is remembered more for his prolific compositional output and eccentric behaviour than for political power and prestige. Castiglione indicates displeasure at men who perform often and in front of anyone just to show off: "let the Courtier turn to music as to a pastime, and as though forced, and not in the presence of persons of low birth or where there is a crowd . . . and let him appear to esteem but little this accomplishment of his, yet by performing it excellently well, make others esteem it highly" (Castiglione 1959, 104). For women, public performance held connotations of undesirable public female display; for example, the Marchesa di Malaspina's impromptu casting in the role of the courtesan in a *comedia all'improvviso* by Orlando di Lasso at the court of Trausnitz, Bavaria, may have reflected a reputation that such a slip in propriety as her open love of musical and dramatic performance earned for her at court.[6]

Musical spectacles, which played an integral role in the huge celebrations surrounding a royal wedding or anniversary of personal or political triumph, were demonstrations of the wealth and cultural superiority of the ruling class. These *feste* offered a public taste of what, it was understood, was enjoyed in private by the privileged few. In such a context, superior musical *intermedi* and theatrical performances added to the display of grandeur and power which helped the ruling classes maintain their powerful cultural hold over the people. The modern political theorist Antonio Gramsci offers a concept of power which is remarkably close to Machiavelli's sixteenth-century understanding of leadership as a combination of coercion —through the use or credible threat of force— and the people's consent, which implies moral and intellectual governing of which the production of culture is a sure sign. According to Giovanni Arrighi, such cultural stimulation could only come about when it was no longer profitable to continue to expand trade in an already glutted capitalist commercial expansion: "the conspicuous consumption of cultural products was a direct result of the adverse commercial conjuncture which made investments in the patronage of the arts a more useful or even a more profitable form of utilization of surplus capital than its reinvestment in trade" (Arrighi 1994, 95). As much as the production of capital, the "consumption of cultural products was integral to a state-making process"; ruling groups won and held allegiances "by intensifying the community's self-consciousness" and heightening the distribution of subtle hegemonic propaganda through the production and popular consumption of literature, art and music (Arrighi 1994, 95). Thus the patronage and occasional performance of music by noble men and women alike underscored their cultural rule of the state.

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[6] This performance is described in Massimo Troiano, *Discourses on the triumphs, tournaments, ceremonies and most notable events at the sumptuous nuptials of the Most Illustrious and Excellent Duke William, first-born of the most noble Albert V, Count Palatine of the Rhine and Duke of Upper and Lower Bavaria, in the year 1568 on the 22nd day of February*, in Oreglia 1968, 5-8.

Noblewomen of the ruling families were encouraged to aid in the production of cultural superiority and were prized for their ability to do so. "All the advances of Renaissance Italy," writes Joan Kelly, "its proto-capitalist economy, its states, and its humanistic culture, worked to mold the noblewoman into an aesthetic object: decorous, chaste, and doubly dependent — on her husband as well as the prince" (Kelly 1984, 47). As much as the employment of a *cappella di musica* which performed at festive occasions and religious services, or a *maestro* to compose and oversee the musical events, an accomplished and vivacious wife, such as Duke Alfonso of Ferrara's fifteen-year-old bride Margherita de Gonzaga, could bring much recognition to her husband's court, through her patronage of artists, poets and musicians, her organization of musical and literary evenings, and her formation of private court entertainments such as were put on by Ferrara's famous *concerto delle donne*.[7] A wife who added to the cultural climate of the court in this way not only added to her husband's reputation but contributed herself to the production of culture and thus moral and intellectual leadership. Indeed, music played a large role in the brilliant courts of the late-fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century North Italian duchesses. Isabella d'Este recommended teaching girls to play the lute, saying that "it is a very useful virtue in ladies in this our age" (letter to Anna d'Alençon, Marchesa de Casale Monferrato, December 11, 1517; in Prizer 1999, 10). Music and art remained a site of empowerment for the courtly lady, strengthening her position at court as a producer of culture, and providing a process by which her own subjectivity and public identity is constructed.

The Renaissance courtier and court lady were both essentially servants of the ruling family, equally dependent upon the favour of their lord and lady whether belonging to the nobility like Count Brancaccio or raised from the *popolo grasso*, as Lavinia Guasco.

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[7] Alfonso I married Margherita de Gonzaga at the age of forty-five in 1579; the Duke remained disappointed when he was unable to produce an heir with this, his third and last wife.

For them, the function of musical ability and performance differed little according to their gender. As an accomplishment, secular music performance was considered a noble and refined adornment for both sexes, and thought to cultivate in each their respective, proper virtues —in women to add grace and beauty, in men to raise their thoughts to gallant and courageous deeds. Personal practice was considered advantageous for both sexes as a means of intellectual stimulation and to offer consolation in times of sorrow, but warned against as a dangerous inflamer of the passions. Because of its frequent connection with love in literary texts and popular ideology, music was cautioned against as a harmful opponent to woman's crowning virtue, chastity; while it was thought that in men the excessive practice of music could lessen the more serious and practical virtues of bravery, physical strength and political acumen. To avoid any possible loss of courage, some courtiers concerned themselves only with public office or military ventures —Captain Gaspare Fracassa Sanseverini refused Caterina Sforza's invitation to join in dance and song, "saying that war was his trade and he sought no other" (in Cartwright 1928, 44)— but generally musical performance was practiced by courtiers and *gentildonne* alike.

As far as performance at court was perceived, the rules were the same for men and women: performance in mixed company for the entertainment and delight of others was acceptable for both genders. Castiglione defines the proper time for music as "whenever one finds himself in a familiar and cherished company where there are no pressing concerns" (Castiglione 1959, 105). Too frequent public performance, flaunting musical talent without proper humility or performing in a crowd or in the presence of persons of lower birth were expressly frowned upon. In short, any performance which lacked "excellence," "discretion" and "good judgement" in its occasion and execution would reflect badly upon the lady or gentleman at court; but an appropriate and well executed performance could gain the amateur musician the special recognition of the court and the favour of the duchess or prince.

Musical ability was highly desirable in women as a sign of 'cultivated' learning — in fact, certain humanists saw woman as "innately capable of excelling in the arts and sciences" (Agrippa, 1526, *De sacramento matrimonii declamato,* in Guinsburg 1981, 11-

12)— yet performance before an audience was not always considered proper. Regionamento Guasco, for instance, in a book written in 1586 for his ten-year-old daughter Lavinia who was about to leave home for the court of Savoy, urges his daughter to continue her studies and her music, hoping that she might one day be the Duchess' secretary. "Such a study as music," he writes,

> which has to be carried on in company cannot be pursued every day, but by doing as well as she can when occasion offers, she will see how well she can perform and win praise. Her singing, if in no other way, will help in that it will keep her voice in breath, forcing her to sustain it, to try to go higher than is possible, to sing exactly, and to go from one voice to another with grace. With many songbooks in her room she can keep up her practice by singing now and then. She will also have her viola da gamba well tuned to aid in singing, and next best her clavichord. Surely there will be in such a company of ladies some able to vie with her in this and other accomplishments. Everything else she can do alone. (In Kelso 1956, 228)

Guasco notes that a young woman should practice her music both by herself and in the company of other ladies, but makes no distinction of performing before ladies only or the whole court in such opportunities as "occasion offers." In contrast, the reception of women performing for noble guests at court was mixed. In response to the famous female singers of Ferrara, listeners both praised them inordinately —"in truth besides being very beautiful it was decorated with such lovely and *diversi passaggi* that one could not [hope to] hear better" (Cavalier Grana)— and decried their public display— "Ladies [the ladies of Ferrara who had just finished singing] are very impressive indeed—in fact, I would rather be an ass than a lady" (Duke Guglielmo de Gonzaga; in Newcomb 1987, 92).

For men, accomplished execution of composition and performance could earn them a significant position at court, and uphold a distinction in the tradition of *fin' amors*, winning especial approval among the ladies. For Castiglione's ideal courtier, music is numbered among the list of necessary arts and accomplishments; not only the intellectual comprehension of the liberal art, but also the practice of music was considered important for both for personal spiritual and emotional succour as well as to delight and entertain in elegant company.

> Gentlemen, you must know that I am not satisfied with our Courtier unless

> he be also a musician, and unless, besides understanding and being able to read music, he can play various instruments. For, if we rightly consider, no rest from toil and no medicine for ailing spirits can be found more decorous or praiseworthy in time of leisure than this; and especially in courts where, besides the release from vexations which music gives to all, many things are done to please the ladies, whose tender and delicate spirits are readily penetrated with harmony and filled with sweetness. Hence, it is no wonder that in both ancient and modern times they have always been particularly fond of musicians, finding music a most welcome food for the spirit. (Castiglione 1959, 74)

Excessive artistic talent, however, could label a courtier as effeminate and jeopardize a reputation for military prowess. Count Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, for example, was retained by the Duke of Ferrara for his singing voice at the expense of his military ambitions; when he was invited to court, the Duke "made a pact with him that he is not to talk of his miracles of war. He is rather to take part now and then in a *musica secreta*, which is being prepared by some ladies of the court" (a Florentine resident at Ferrara; in Newcomb 1975, 95). As Brancaccio realized that his music-making was ruining his reputation as a military veteran, he became so affronted by this slight to his masculine ego that he finally refused to sing anymore and promptly left the Duke's service.

A debate about the damage of music to a courtier's masculinity occurs in Castiglione's well-known conversation. The fear that the 'vanity' of music may corrupt a man's courage and bravery is countered in the fashion of humanist debate by citing exemplary historical figures who, though renowned for their bravery and wisdom, yet indulged in music performance.

> Then Signor Gasparo said: "I think that music, along with many other vanities, is indeed well suited to women, and perhaps also to others who have the appearance of men, but not to real men; for the latter ought not to render their minds effeminate and afraid of death."
>
> "Say not so," replied the Count, "or I shall launch upon you a great sea of praise for music, reminding you how greatly music was always celebrated by the ancients and held to be a sacred thing; and how . . . Alexander was sometimes so passionately excited by music that, almost in spite of himself, he was obliged to quit the banquet table and rush off to arms; . . . Socrates learned to play the cithara when he was very old . . . [and] both Plato and Aristotle wish a man who is well constituted to be a musician. . . . Music

> must of necessity be learned from childhood, not so much for the sake of that outward melody which is heard, but because of the power it has to induce a good new habit of mind and an inclination to virtue . . . music [is] not harmful to the pursuits of peace and of war, but greatly to their advantage. . . . melody provides the greatest relief from every human toil and care . . ."
>
> The Magnifico Giuliano said: "I am not at all of signor Gasparo's opinion. Indeed I think, for the reasons given by you and for many others, that music is not only an ornament but a necessity to the Courtier."
>
> (Castiglione 1959, 75-77)

The influence of treatises like Castiglione's *Il Libro di Cortegiano* was immense, for many courtiers actually did model themselves on the courtly knight and took pride in displays of chivalry. Galeazzo Sanseverino, for example, was one such Renaissance knight who was excessively lauded for his personal charm, his knowledge of art and learning, and his physical prowess in tournaments and battles: "French and Italian chroniclers alike own the fascination of his handsome presence and extol the gentilezza of this very perfect knight" (Cartwright 1928, 44). A model of courtesy and grace, Sanseverino was eagerly befriended by influential ladies such as Isabella and Beatrice d'Este and Elisabetta Gonzaga, and as a mark of special favour, in 1489 he was betrothed to Bianca Sforza, a favourite natural daughter of the powerful Duke Ludovico Sforza *Il Moro*, although he had to wait five years before he could take his young bride home. Although it held advantage and disadvantage for both sexes, for the knights and ladies of the Renaissance court, music in the form of a fine singing voice and some instrumental skill was considered a necessary courtly accomplishment.

Music was practiced and patronized for similar reasons in the bourgeois circles of the urban civic or merchant class of sixteenth-century Italy. Within academies, literary salons and domestic environments, music reflected the refinement and education, and hence the economic prosperity, of the practitioner and his or her family. Of the emerging Renaissance estates, the new patrician commercial class was perhaps the most complex in nature and variety. Established families rivaled so-called 'new men', and the class was divided between the *popolo grasso* —non-noble landowners, rich bankers, merchant-industrialists and professional guild members— and the *popolo minuto* made up of self-employed craftsmen, shopkeepers, family businesses and labourers who were not guild members and were excluded from holding civic office. Certainly for the *popolo grasso*, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the *popolo minuto*, the employment of musicians and domestic practice of music reflected their aspiration to the wealth and power of the aristocracy. Banker and merchant Jacopo Corsi of Florence (1561-1602) thought it necessary to be educated in singing, lute, keyboard and composition, and was an amateur performer in musical soirees as well as a patron of Florentine musicians and composers. In the late fifteenth century, the English wool-merchant George Cely took music lessons at Calais from Thomas Rede, a professional harpist. Christopher Page surveys fifteenth-century wills and household inventories to discover what kinds of middle-class persons played the lute, and concludes that "it is sobering to find middle-class landowners, Oxford students, civil servants and high-ranking ecclesiastics" who owned instruments, music books and undoubtedly practiced music in their own homes (Page 1981, 20).

The *nouveau riche* of this middle stratum of society played a substantial role in the growth of music printing throughout the sixteenth century. With their increased wealth, education and leisure time and the desire to emulate the courtly arts of the nobility, the Italian bourgeoisie formed a significant clientele which sustained the market for printed music. As Iain Fenlon observes, in towns from Venice to Norwich to Beauvais, "the expansion of musical literacy and practice of which the growing market for music and books about music is a symptom, occurred for the most part within this stratum of society" (Fenlon 1989, 36). The demand for accessible, popular pieces to be performed by domestic amateurs was met by the advent of affordable publications from firms like Antonio Gardano and Girolamo Scotto in the 1530s, whose large-scale music prints helped push the Italian madrigal into the realm of bourgeois domestic music. Both men and women from bourgeois families performed such music for private domestic entertainment; secular vocal music like the madrigal was also performed and discussed in Italian *ridotti* or artistic salons, sponsored by wealthy intellectuals, and frequently hosted by literary women or courtesans. A woman's participation in either of these musical spheres depended on the economic or professional status of her guardian as well as her family's attitude toward music and education.

The moral and chivalrous ideals which confined the aristocratic woman's musical education and performance produced even stronger restrictions within middle class environs, where a girl could not rely on the wealth, power and noble name of her family to preserve her honourable reputation. Such aristocratic protection allowed Lucrezia Borgia —third-time bride, mother of two, and subject of rumours of murder and incest— to be calmly hailed as Italy's pure and peerless virgin upon her marriage to Alfonso d'Este; no such pardon would as readily be granted a poorer, less powerful woman whose reputation became even slightly as tarnished as Lucrezia's. In the case of one musical woman, Giulia, repeated musical activities compounded a suspicion of immorality. The daughter of Veronese Giovanni Francesco, Giulia taught music, particularly the harpsichord, to the sons and daughters of rich families, and was considered a *virtuosa di sonar, di parlar, e di scriver* (a person skilled in playing, speaking and writing). We know about Giulia mainly through court proceedings which record that her husband sought an injunction to punish her for alleged infidelity, citing as evidence that she "received a certain young man repeatedly for lessons, that they sang together, and that she played for his friends" (in Newcomb 1975, 105).

A severe bourgeois moral code overshadowed women's musical activities and in many cases limited women's experience to private practice within domestic spheres. Music, along with dancing, was "under deep suspicion with the moralists" (Kelso 1956, 52), and was an openly debated topic in handbooks for bourgeois women, which discussed positive and negative aspects of women's musical participation. Although the main argument for music was its claim to grace, beauty and spiritual solace, virtues that suited a cultured young lady, music held social and economic advantages as well. It was acknowledged that musical performance, particularly singing, but also playing lute, viol, clavichord and other keyboard instruments, could gain an accomplished woman, and her father or husband, special recognition and so was respected as a potentially lucrative ornament to her sex. Even Giulia Francesco's husband admitted that his wife's musical service to an important family gained him his position in civic administration. Music could also elevate a woman's social standing, placing her on an equal cultural level with the accomplished *donna di palazzo,* or find her a place in the household of the ruling duchess or *marchesa*. The negative side of the debate seems to have been argued solely on moral grounds: music held age-old connotations of sexual stimulation and so was considered a dangerous possession for a young woman whose chief honour depended on "immaculate chastity" and "unconditional obedience" (Kelso 1956, 38).

> Music, though admittedly one of the liberal arts, fell under the disapproval of most as another inflamer of passions and excuse for public display of beauty and skill. Under the name of virtue, they said, it carries grave and important evils, especially at banquets, where rich food has already loosened the mind. Some would not allow the girl to be trained to play or sing at all, even though they granted that most people thought it an ornament and grace to a girl of gentle birth to master both arts. Others would have her taught but only for private use as recreation and consolation in times of sorrow, trouble, and anxiety, or as a pastime in vacant hours if she has nothing better to do. Then she will play and sing at the proper time and place, and always modestly and not to be heard. Or rarely, admitting the pressure of custom, one may be found to advise that when this girl of gentle birth must sing in public she will sing chaste songs in a low voice and without oblique looks, but with reverence and shame in her face. (Kelso 1956, 53)

Because of its immoral connotations, many conduct books shunned music as practice for middle class girls: Giovanni Bruto, who wrote his *La institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilimente* (1555) for Marietta Cattaneo, the daughter of a Genoese shipping magnate, cautions women against music and classical learning in favour of the more useful feminine skills of spinning and sewing, and urges women to "read the Scriptures, not 'ballades, Songes, sonettes and Ditties of dalliance'" (in Jones 1990, 23); similarly, Thomas Powell's *The Art of Thriving, or the plaine path-way to preferment* (1635) advises middle-class girls to "let greater personages glory their skill in Musicke" and "instead of Song and Musick, let them learne Cookery & Laundry, and in steade of reading Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia, let them read the grounds of good Huswifery" (in Jones 1990, 25).

Generally, singing and playing an instrument such as the lute or harpsichord was considered a suitable accomplishment for middle-class young women. Yet performance outside of a private or domestic sphere was rarely encouraged, unless the girl was a member of a professional musical family. The purely domestic position of bourgeois women was enforced as much to distinguish them from the lower classes as to emulate the upper ones: a woman who concerned herself solely with the comfort of her family and did not have to contribute to the economic functions of the household or business connoted the increased leisure and wealth of the middle classes and was a step above those proletariat families where both women and men engaged in productive labour.

As the *cinquecento* progressed, female musicians emerged from this middle class, who, like Giulia Francesco, used their musical skill to economic advantage as teachers or performers. In the education and refinement of their daughters, bourgeois families professed a striving after aristocratic ideals, yet succeeded in producing a skill or product which they could in turn sell to survive. Middle class girls were sometimes educated in the hope of receiving court appointments where their musical talent would serve them well as ladies-in-waiting to a duchess or princess, but the adoption of an amateur attitude was needed to keep their musical production respectable and maintain their distance from a negative connotation of professionalism. Professionalism for women of any class carried with it the age old stigma of the one profession women were (by virtue of continued male patronage) encouraged to hold— prostitution. When "sixteenth-century writers worried about women using music to lure men into the dangers of love" (Wiesner 1993, 155), however decorously this might be worded in treatises addressed to young girls, such associations of music with love generally translated into an association of performance, especially public performance, with sexual exploitation.

It is more difficult to assess the degree to which bourgeois behavioral conventions influenced the position of women and the performance of music among the lower classes. It appears that proletarian women were not as routinely discouraged from public performance by notions of propriety and etiquette as were the bourgeoisie. Among the proletariat the distribution of labour according to gender was not so imbalanced, and women worked alongside men as they had done in the middle ages, actively participating in, for instance, the cloth industry, the production and sale of agricultural goods and music-related labour, although the gendered division of tasks was still prevalent in many industries.[8] Although we know least about the working classes of any society, we can infer from literature, industry chronicles, travel diaries or popular histories that music was a popular form of entertainment at this social level. Even though our records of music's role in proletarian life sometimes comes from dubious sources, we can be assured that music was practiced by agricultural peasants and pre-industrial workers. Paintings, poetry and song texts present glamorized pastoral or rustic scenes of contented rural peasants singing as they work happily in the fields, shepherds and shepherdesses calling to each other on their pipes and flutes, women harmonizing together as they meet at a well or spinning wheel, and hawkers musically describing their wares in the town square. Although the image conjured up by popular literature and art has more to do with a growing idealization of country life and an intellectual humanization of the proletariat on the part of the literati than it does with actual working conditions, we can assume that music formed a common element of daily life in the social spheres portrayed.

James Haar uses the scant evidence of eyewitness description and surviving rhyme books (*opuscoli*) to support his portrait of the *ciarlatani* and *cantastorie*— lower class poet-singers and improvisors who sang epic and chivalric verse and told stories of Roman history to the accompaniment of plucked strings, entertaining crowds in the streets and piazzas of the larger Italian cities from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries (Haar 1986a, 76-85). In fact, in contrast to the simple, rustic songs of the popularized Italian countryside, a traveler to Florence, eager to point out that city's advanced intellectual and cultural standard, noted that even "illiterate workmen went about singing verses from Dante's Divine Comedy" (Hale 1965, 44). Not to be outdone by a rival city, Giovanni Battista del Tufo extols the musical virtues of his native Neapolitans, pointing to a broad social base of Italian music making: "the ear will obtain all it cares for from songs, music and sounds in every corner of the city, all that it wants in tunes and words, day and night, by the hundred, so that it will nevermore long for any other kind of happiness. Likewise in the shops everywhere, and with no need of instruction, all those workers and Neapolitan shopkeepers of ours sing *arie* or *canzoni*, needles and scissors in hand" (in Stubbs 1991, 4). Merry Wiesner credits proletariat women with informally composing and performing "folk ballads, songs, lullabies and other types of popular music," especially songs which traditionally accompanied women's work like spinning or child care (Wiesner 1993, 156). Wiesner even suggests that "women were often the most well-known singers of all types of songs, adding verses, changing content and altering the tunes as they sang them" (Wiesner 1993, 156), but there is little evidence to support such common assumptions.

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[8] The cloth industry, for instance, saw injunctions against female weavers in several northern cities while spinning continued to be looked upon as women's work; in Augsburg a group of female weavers submitted a corporate petition against the new law, protesting that weaving "is a fine and honorable female trade" (in Wiesner 1986, 8). In medicine, female healers were discouraged from continuing their practice, and while women might brew herbal remedies and attend to the neighbouring sick, only men could use the title "apothecary" and only those who had attended university medical school could be called "physicians." In contrast, midwives continued to operate legally and even formed organized societies.

Since music remained an oral art form for these proletarian songsters, we have even less to guide us in the types of songs that were performed. One of the chief sources of information about the musical styles of the working classes comes from the popular practice of composing songs in the idealized style of the lower classes; thus the *villanella*, *frottola*, and *estampie* are all reflective of the upper two estates' perception of their lower class neighbours' musical tastes. The *canzoni villanesca alla napolitana* (literally a peasant song in the Neapolitan manner) which became extremely popular during the 1530s-70s, was rooted in the oral folk traditions of southern Italy; the earlier courtly *frottola* may also have had its origins in this tradition. However, the nature of the subsequent written music and its relation to the reality of proletarian musical style is complex and difficult to establish, especially as the lyrics reveal more about Classically influenced pastoral poetry than themes relevant to rural and urban working people.

The Socioeconomic Position of the Female Musician

There is no doubt that across the wide social playing field of the Italian Renaissance, women of every economic, political and social situation engaged in secular music making in their daily lives, whether in the capacity of performers, patrons or audience. Examples of women singing and playing musical instruments are found in poetry, iconography, song texts, moral treatises, diaries and letters, with fictionalized accounts dwelling alongside portraits of very real female musicians. Within this varied record of sixteenth-century Italy can be found the names of over 60 women who were distinguished during their lifetime for the beauty and skill of their singing. In most descriptions, a beautiful singing voice is discussed as just one of many valued attributes displayed by the woman in question, but for several of these known performers, singing constituted their primary occupation. Yet even with the aid of these names and their (in some cases very sketchy) biographies we cannot differentiate a specific class of women performers —the social classification of the female singer of the sixteenth century is complex and cannot be generalized.

One of the difficulties in understanding the socioeconomic position of the female Renaissance musician lies in the vastly underexplored association of music and class —a territory much less frequently studied than music and gender. Unfortunately, the most widely recognized sociological theory of music —and one of the only studies to attempt a Marxist classification of music and musicians— is still Theodor Adorno's *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1962). While exploring "the relation of music to the social classes," Adorno's series of essays reveals his painfully outdated adherence to an old-world musical canon which ignores non-European, popular, modern and early music, and an equally narrow methodology. Ultimately, Adorno describes all musicians (especially composers) as deriving from the petty bourgeoisie, claiming that musicians rarely, if ever, came from the working class or the grand bourgeoisie, rather they "mostly arose from the petty bourgeois middle class or from their own guild" (Adorno 1962, 56-57). Adorno's categorical denial of the existence of musical labourers or noblemen reinforces the essentialist ideology which characterizes his dated study. Yet the modern scholar can learn from the gaps in Adorno's theoretical work —those places where Adorno blithely glosses over certain musical anomalies which do not conform to his bourgeois model. For instance, he quickly dismisses the composer Prince Gesualdo da Venosa as "an outsider in every sense, [who] defies modern sociological categories" (Adorno 1962, 57); yet it is precisely this defiance that begins to illumine the complex socioeconomic position of the Renaissance musician. Just as we cannot define Italian politics in terms of one system of government or property relations, so we cannot confine the Renaissance musician to one social stratum. In this instance the scholar can take a cue from feminist investigation and acknowledge that any socio-historical study must allow for multiple relationships and representations which will differ for each specific situation; a successful study must be framed in terms of local and specific forms of social relationships and meanings.

Women singers came from diverse social backgrounds: professional musical clans like Giulio Caccini's whose daughters and wives were trained and managed by their father and husband, or Leonora and Caterina Baroni, who sang together with their mother Adriane Basile (and possibly with their aunts, Margherita and Vittoria Basile who were also singers); the upper bourgeois merchant class like Laura Peverara; the minor nobility like Livia d'Arco, whose father was a Mantuan nobleman in precarious financial circumstances, or Lucrezia, Isabella and Taddea Bendidio, who came from an ancient and wealthy Ferrarese family; or intellectual court circles, like Anna Guarini, daughter of Ferrarese court poet and secretary Giovanni Battista Guarini. Renowned women singers are even found in the ruling families and lower working-classes: both Isabella and Beatrice d'Este were praised for the beauty of their voices and musical skills, while Caterina Martinelli came from a family "of modest background" (Newcomb 1987, 101).

A girl's class and upbringing affected her participation in vocal music in several ways: it could instill in her a particular moral or economic attitude towards female singing, enhance her possibility of a court position or access to academies or salons where she might perform, but primarily, the economic and social status of her family determined the availability of music education. When Marx writes

> *music alone awakens in man the sense of music* . . . the most beautiful music has no sense for the unmusical ear—is no object for it, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers and can therefore only be so for me as my essential power is present for itself as a subjective capacity, because *the sense of an object for me goes only so far as my senses go*

he is pointing to the great importance of "'aesthetic education' without which one cannot create the organ of artistic consumption in man" (in Mészáros 1970, 210). Artistic consumption is directly related to the affluence or impoverishment of any level of society or particular family, for wealth and leisure are prerequisites to the enjoyment of aesthetic pleasures: "it is a *pre-condition* of art," writes Mészáros, "that man should achieve a certain *distance* (freedom) from his direct natural needs" (Mészáros 1970, 209). Similarly, artistic education, and more particularly the way such education is perceived, is also related to wealth and class. Music education among the wealthy upper classes produced women who became connoisseurs, patrons and admired 'amateur' performers who sang solely for personal or social pleasure, while for those of lower classes who had access to education, music was a viable commodity or saleable skill.

For those women who regarded singing as their primary occupation, especially for the virtuosic members of the *concerti di donne* which flourished toward the end of the century, class and social status tainted their perception and representation of their profession. Although sometimes singing for incidental remuneration or material reward on a simple contract basis, as did the English Anna *Cantatrice* who performed for the Milanese wedding of Galeazzo Sforza and Bona of Savoy in 1463, receiving 100 ducats from Galeazzo for the journey back to England, many women singers sought court positions where they were retained on an annual salary. In the majority of cases, these women were hired not as singers but as ladies-in-waiting to a duchess or princess. As such their music-making would have the respectable veneer of courtly recreation and allow them to ascend from the ranks of professional artisan to that of courtly lady.

A reputation of moral virtue was sought after even by those women who sang in the less respectable public settings of the theatre or salon. The famous *commedia dell'arte* actor and singer Isabella Andreini, whose daughter Virginia sang the title role in the premiere of Monteverdi's *L'Arianna* in 1608, although engaged in one of the most reviled professions for women, not only maintained a reputation for extraordinary beauty and intellect, but was known throughout her life as a *donna di salda virtù* ("a woman of solid virtue"; in Newcomb 1975, 104). Similarly, the premier Petrarchan poet Vittoria Colonna, who performed in improvised genres in academies and regularly held her own musical and poetic salon, is described by Castiglione as having a "wisdom and prudence . . . [and] virtue I have always held in veneration as something divine" (Castiglione 1959, 1). Decades after her own successful singing career, Francesca Caccini refused to let her daughter Margherita sing on stage in a *commedia* at the Grand Duke of Florence's command, "arguing that such an appearance could compromise the fifteen-year-old's chances of an honourable convent placement or marriage contract, [and] would tarnish the social position of her son" (Cusick 1994b, 97).

All musicians, whether teacher, composer, director or performer, in some way contracted their labour to a member or family of the ruling class, or a religious, municipal or state institution, in order to earn a living; yet the economic relationships surrounding the employment of women singers are more complex than the relationship of working proletariat to a capitalist employer. Though the specific situations varied from patrician republic to princely court to bourgeois domesticity, patronage still operated in terms of a primarily feudal relationship, and in many cases a woman could not even choose her own career or receive a direct salary, simply due to the legal and social rules which governed her gender. Only the most popular and gifted of the women singers of the Italian Renaissance escaped the control of husband or father, and reached a level of independence where they could command huge salaries in court positions (as ladies-in-waiting or *musici extraordinari*), reserving their own right to accept or decline offers of employment, and gaining superior social status through the cult popularity of their performances.

It is not bourgeois morality or humanist ideals which have shaped our understanding of the women musicians of the Renaissance so much as history and modern scholarship. History remembers Vittoria Archilei as an accomplished musician, composer and virtuosic singer of staged *intermedi*, but labels Vincenza Armani an actress, although she also wrote madrigals, set them to music and sang them to instrumental accompaniment, and scholarship distinguishes between the gentlewoman Graziosa Pia who sang duets and accompanied Lucrezia Borgia on her lute and the singer Madonna Dalida Puti, mistress of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este and favourite of Lucrezia's household. Yet these views are not shaped so much by Renaissance ideology as by a modern need to isolate a working occupation and separate it from all other social functions. In Renaissance Italy, whether practiced in the court, home, salon, theatre, or academy, for financial gain, social prestige or personal pleasure, by a duchess, bourgeois wife or artisan's daughter, singing was considered a beautiful skill and accomplishment which, although it possessed a dangerous potential for immoral consequences, nevertheless ornamented a woman of any class and graced any social function. As a socially significant practice, singing allowed the Renaissance woman a means of formulating a social identity and self-expression in a world of restrictive societal norms which all too often sought to circumscribe her individuality and purpose.

Chapter Two

De Laudibus Mulierum — Music in the Lives of the Northern Duchesses

In 1514 King Francis I, resident at Milan and in the companionship of the fifteen-year-old Federico Gonzaga, asked the young prince to write to his mother Isabella d'Este, "*la prima donna del mondo,*" requesting a wax doll, "clad in the Mantuan style, with the pattern of robe, vest and sleeves worn by yourself, and hair dressed in the same fashion, so that the French ladies might be able to copy them" (in Cartwright 1903, 124).[1] In the early sixteenth century, the great princes and princesses of the northern courts of Italy were the makers of fashion and culture and their style and taste was emulated throughout Europe, not only in matters of apparel, but in architecture, philosophy, art and particularly music. The establishment of a reputation for cultural and intellectual superiority was just one aspect of the reigning despot's attempt to maintain control through his identity as a humanist prince, a position backed up by the implicit wealth and military power which displays of cultural magnificence ultimately betokened. But for a leading lady of the Italian courts, the realm of art and culture constituted the main sphere through which she might construct a public image, and the patronage and performance of music played a significant role in the formation of a noblewoman's social identity.

Jacob Burckhardt is one of the earliest historians to recognize the Italian Renaissance as an age which fostered the rise of the individual. "In the Middle Ages," Burckhardt writes, "Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air; an *objective* treatment and consideration of the State and of all the things of this world became possible. The *subjective* side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a spiritual *individual*, and recognized himself as such" (Burckhardt 1999, 81). More recent historians have echoed Burckhardt's assertion, pointing to different catalysts in their affirmation of the emergence of a social and psychological individual, amending Burckhardt's nineteenth-century understanding of the individual with contemporary critical approaches.

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[1] The title "prima donna del mondo" was first given to Isabella d'Este by poet and courtier Niccolò da Corregio.

István Mészáros, for instance, declares that the concept of individuality in the Renaissance arose due to "the dynamic development of the capitalistic relations of production which required the universal extension of 'liberty' to every single individual so that he could enter into 'free contractual relations' with other individuals, for the purpose of selling and alienating everything that belongs to him, including his own labour power" (Mészáros 1970, 255). Stephen Greenblatt, on the other hand, points to various socio-historical conditioned circumstances in the development of the individual: "there is in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social and psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities" (Greenblatt 1980, 1). The need to be recognized as an individual was influenced by and simultaneously contributed to an increased emphasis on education and learning, a heightened recognition of individual scholars and artists, and especially among the aristocracy, the desire to be remembered as a cultured and civilized leader—and most importantly the idea that this identity could be self-fashioned and self-promoted. As Greenblatt remarks, "in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process"(1980, 2), and this process is seen in both the men and women of the Italian aristocracy.

Speaking of English authors, Greenblatt suggests that "it is in the sixteenth century that *fashion* seems to come into wide currency as a way of designating the forming of a self "(1980, 2), but the trend seems even more influential in Italy where the ubiquitous Castiglione speaks of "forming" and "fashioning" the self: "let us form such a Courtier that any prince [might be] worthy of being served by him"—"I will speak of this excellent Lady as I would wish her to be; and when I have fashioned her to my taste, and since then I may not have another, like Pygmalion I will take her for my own" (Castiglione 1959, 12 & 205). The notion that one could fashion a distinctive personality, a characteristic mode of behaviour or a social or intellectual perception in one's own self or in others is inherent throughout the many Italian conduct books and behavioural guides that were popularized during the Renaissance. The implementation of these ideas is seen constantly not only in the attempts of the *condottieres* who ruled the new despotic states to promote themselves as ideal Christian princes, but also in the actions of the women who aspired to rule the intellectual and cultural 'courts' which flourished in the northern city-states of Urbino, Ferrara, Mantua and Milan. The early duchesses of these northern courts —Elisabetta Gonzaga (1471-1526), Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519), Isabella d'Este (1474-1539) and Beatrice d'Este (1475-1497)— ushered in the sixteenth century under the guise of guiding muses: embracing reputations that, while they upheld the common societal conventions which relegated women to cultural and recreational activities, nevertheless fostered the development of a distinctive individual self-identity.

Any feminist discussion of personal and social identity immediately arouses issues of the "individual" versus "society", of a distinction between "personal" and "political", and the dichotomy of "private" and "public" space. Such issues have been characterized as "central to a modern world view" rooted in the acquisition of private property, but also "central to the modern subordination of women," and have been seen by feminists as "antithetical to the needs of women" (Nicholson 1990, 13). Yet an exploration of the individuality of the northern duchesses reveals that the Renaissance noblewomen sought not a separation of the personal and social in their expression of individualism, but a complex intersection of the two spheres. Through the deliberate use of expected social conventions —whether conformed to or subverted— the Renaissance woman could shape a public identity which was at once infused with individual personality and purpose.

In the amorphous socioeconomic fabric of the northern city-states, where enduring feudal practices such as conferring fiefs on loyal nobles, and vassal-lord relationships of patronage lingered alongside increased political and economic activity by urban patriciates, the division of private and public was subsumed in the more complex cultivation of individual and familial political relationships: "the tension between public discipline and private privilege set the state on a new course, that of regulating relationships within and between families, as governing elites sought to secure their status by enacting rules for male behaviour, female behaviour, and the relations between men and women" (Chojnacki 1998, 65). The representational practices employed by the duchesses of the northern courts crossed private and public spaces, and ranged from the personal enjoyment of art and music and fulfilment of domestic and maternal duties, to the encouraged circulation of laudatory poems and literary dedications, and public displays of speech-making, musical performance and dancing. Speaking of the Carmelite mystic Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, Karen-Edis Barzman comments, "there was no identity, there was no self, prior to the formation of her self in and through a range of practices that carried specific meanings. . . . Any discussion of the formation of her gendered self has to take into account the location of the woman's actions in the semiotic field, within which she, and all of her contemporaries, had to assume positions that pre-existed their interventions as users of language and representation" (1998, 230). Each semiotic action, speech and gesture, located against a backdrop of expected virtue and behaviour, helped to define the ideal of the Renaissance woman, or to diffuse that ideal.

Looking at just one aspect of cultural representation in the lives of the northern duchesses, the performance and patronage of music, we can see how their own representative actions positioned against the pre-existing semiotic field of the ideal Renaissance woman helped to shape a social identity which proclaimed their individuality and gender. If the category of gender is central to a discussion of social positioning, it also requires, as Judith Butler states, an intersection "with race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and other currents which contribute to the formation of cultural (non)identity" (1990b, 325); as gender plays a crucial role in the construction of cultural identity, so culture plays a part in the construction of a gendered identity. One specific cultural practice integral to the social fabric of Renaissance Italy was the performance of music. For the courtly *madonna*, music functioned as a site of self-empowerment: it strengthened her position at court as a producer and protector of culture, and it provided an activity through which a subjective voice and public identity could be constructed. In a world where women were marginalized by political and societal laws excluding them from the inheritance of land and title, limiting their political and military participation, controlling their access to financial management before and within marriage, and relegating them to domestic social roles, the patronage and performance of music afforded the Renaissance noblewoman an opportunity to forge a cultural identity which transcended her socio-political confines.

In the early sixteenth-century courts of Ferrara, Mantua, Milan and Urbino, music played a role in the court entertainments and daily lives of the duchesses and their *donzelle*, governed by the rules of propriety and court politics, the idealizations of the courtly *prima donna* and her chivalrous pastimes, and the influential status which such a leader in culture and fashion upheld throughout the European world. To conform to these expectations, a leading lady of the sixteenth century would be well-educated in the humanist disciplines, including a knowledge of music, and be able to perform on various stringed instruments as well as sing. Yet she availed herself of only those performance opportunities that courtly protocol allowed, singing and playing with her own ladies in her private chambers, only on special occasions condescending to perform for the enlightenment of the court. She also involved herself in the musical education of her ladies-in-waiting and her own children, particularly her daughters. A lady of wealth and rank would maintain among her household a group of court musicians to perform in intimate chamber settings as well as for visiting guests, and she patronized poets and composers, commissioning not grand festive works, but smaller chamber pieces from within such genres as she and her court women were most likely to perform or attend. Depending on her personal inclination, she might also be involved in the production of grand *feste* and balls which were a regular part of court entertainment, especially during festive seasons like the winter Twelfth Night and Carnival celebrations, or on the occasion of visiting ambassadors or royalty. For the duchesses of the northern Italian courts, a lady's musical activities were dictated by her rank and position, her education and personal interest, but above all by her gender.

Music, a Family Tradition

Music first of all functioned as an indicator of the wealth, nobility and family heritage to which the daughters and wives of the Este, Gonzaga, Montefeltro and Sforza families laid claim. The reputation for cultural magnificence that an aristocratic family like the Estensi of Ferrara maintained was extended through the liberal humanist education given to both sons and daughters of the ruling house—an education which included music among the essential liberal arts. Following a curriculum established by their mother, Eleanora d'Aragona (herself the recipient of an extensive musical education and the dedicatee of Bartolomeo Goggio's 1487 *De laudibus mulierum*) the three Este girls (Isabella, Beatrice and Ercole I's illegitimate daughter Lucrezia) were given an education which combined the humanist teaching of Battista Guarino, Sebastiano da Lugo and Jacopo Gallino, with instruction in religion, domestic arts and the social skills required by these eligible girls destined to preside over the courts of Bologna, Mantua and Milan. Music and dancing were important aspects of this courtly education: "almost from infancy" the young princesses were taught the latest rhythms and steps by the finest dancing masters in Italy—first by Ambrogio da Urbino, and later by Lorenzo Lavagnolo who came highly recommended by the Duchess of Milan and the Marchesa Barbara of Mantua as "superior to all other professors of the art of dancing" (Cartwright 1928, 37). Music was given equal place with dance, taught not by the humanist philosophers as a theoretical science, but by the performing musicians of the court as a practical accomplishment.

At Ferrara the three girls were taught music primarily by the Flemish singer and composer Johannes Martini, employed in the Duke's *cappella* from 1472.[2] Under his tutelage, they learned music literacy, vocal technique and keyboard skills (Isabella later owned and played the clavichord, harpsichord and portative organs). Martini was a skilled vocalist and so competent an instructor that upon moving to Mantua, Isabella claimed she could find no teacher to rival him at her new court.[3] Although in his position as the leading "cantadore compositore" of the Ducal *cappella* Martini was primarily a singer and composer of sacred music, he nevertheless was equally skilled in secular entertainment, for the young Estensi princes and princesses learned to sing and play *canzoni*, sonnets, and other secular genres.[4] Prizer emphasizes the fact that this vocal training was "not the traditional rote or 'unwritten' method of teaching music, but was firmly rooted in the written tradition" and cites evidence that Isabella owned and used several written singing methods.

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[2] The musical education of Isabella d'Este is treated at length in Prizer 1999.

Another secular *cantore*, Francesco Cieco, to whom the epic *Mambriano* is attributed, had spent the decade of the 1470s in Ferrara, and may have had a hand in the young princesses' early education. He was certainly remembered by Isabella who wrote to a Gonzaga relative in 1492 to request Cieco's singing for a special event at Mantua. The Este girls may also have learned secular singing to lute or lira da braccio accompaniment from the renowned lutenist-improvisor Pietrobono who served the court at Ferrara from about 1440 until his death in 1497.[5] In a lovely portrait of the two young sisters, part of a fresco which adorns a wall in the Palazzo of Ludovico il Moro in Ferrara, Isabella leans over a *trompe-l'oeil* balcony holding a lute, while Beatrice shyly gazes out from behind her older sister. The artist has chosen not to capture an actual lesson or performance, rather the two girls gaze at the viewer with expressions of sweet innocence; yet the lute remains a reminder of the Estensi family's wealth, education and cultural accomplishment, as well as a metaphor for familial harmony, intensified by the girls' comfortable physical closeness which bespeaks an intimate sisterly bond.

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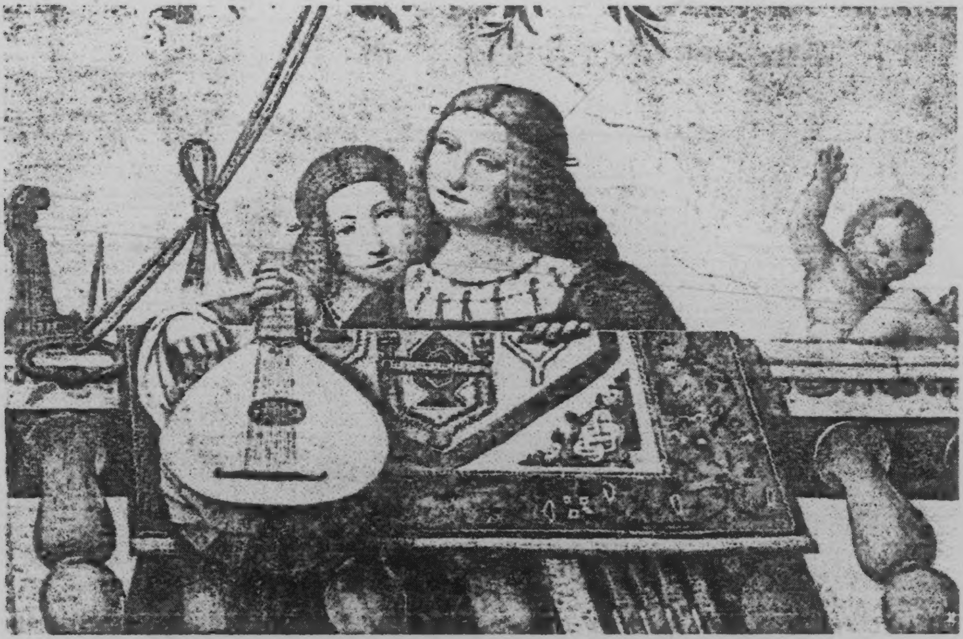
[3] Letter of 30 August 1490, from Isabella to Duke Ercole I; quoted on page 62.

[4] See chapter three, pages 136-137 for further discussion of the differing styles of sacred and secular singing.

[5] The involvement of Pietrobono and Cieco in the Este girls' music education has also been suggested by James Haar (1986), although only Martini's tutelage can be substantiated by surviving correspondence. Prizer also cites Girolamo del Bruno, canon in the Ferrarese cathedral, Girolamo da Sestola, nicknamed "il Cogilia," as possible keyboard teachers and the tenorista Francesco Malacise de la Gatta and Rainaldo del Chitarino as lutenists at Ferrara who may have taught the Este children (Prizer 1999).



Garofalo. *Isabella and Beatrice d'Este.* Ferrara, Palazzo di Ludovico il Moro. Reproduced in Gallico 1961.

The musical education accorded to the young Este princesses was a typical element in the formation of the ideal Renaissance court lady. Music performance had long been considered a fundamental, if somewhat controversial, accomplishment for noble and upper class women, and no courtly lady's education was complete without achieving some proficiency on one or more instruments as well as developing a pleasing singing voice, and, at the very least, an informed appreciation of fine court music. Such musical education was deemed necessary not merely for personal enjoyment, but to add to the cultural brilliance of the court. Margaret McGowan affirms that "the artistic accomplishments that Isabella and Beatrice d'Este, for instance, acquired were essential to the social and intellectual refinement that Renaissance Courts increasingly demanded" (McGowan 1984, 62). The significant cultural atmosphere in which Isabella and Beatrice grew up (both at Ferrara, and in the case of Beatrice at her grandfather King Ferrante d'Aragona's court of Naples) was fundamental in shaping their future tastes and interests —in art, antiquities, literature and philosophy along with music— as well as the generosity and assiduity with which they continued to pursue musical performance and patronage in their respective roles as Marchesa of Mantua and Duchess of Milan.

Under the influence of parents and tutors a young girl would have understood, however unconsciously, the importance to her future of excelling in her studies. Such a comprehension combined with an innate intelligence and precocious personality constituted the first step towards the formation of a public identity as a leading court lady. Even as a child, Isabella in particular was held up to the world as the very model of a Renaissance *madonna*. Mantuan envoys sent to Ferrara to arrange the marriage of Marquis Federico Gonzaga's eldest son and the six-year-old Isabella were amazed at "her marvelous knowledge" and "singular intelligence" as well as the "grace and elegance" she displayed when dancing before the court with her teacher Messer Ambrogio (letters of Beltramino Cusatro and Cosimo Tura, April 1480; in Cartwright 1903, 4). In the same year, a letter from Benedetto Accolti to the Cardinal of Ravenna describes the young princess playing the *gravicembalo* to the delight of all at a courtly gathering (in Cartwright 1903, 385). Her reputation as the darling of the Ferrarese court along with being the eldest daughter of the Duke earned Isabella marriage offers from both the Gonzagas of Mantua and the Sforzas of Milan, of which the latter was subsequently transferred to her sister Beatrice. The act of displaying personal accomplishments and social graces in order to impress her audience was a lesson well learned by the young Isabella, and one put to considerable use throughout her life.

While a girl might have no control over her educational opportunities, as a lady of the court, a young wife could have considerable opportunity to further her own learning. To the Italian courtier, music was not merely a subject to be learned by rote and mastered during childhood; rather it was an ongoing life pursuit, for these self-styled leaders of culture and fashion needed to keep abreast of the latest developments in genre, style and instrumentation. With a love of music instilled in them at an early age, both Beatrice and Isabella continued their musical studies after their subsequent marriages, learning new songs and new instruments.[6] Moving from Ferrara to Mantua as the wife of Marchese Francesco Gonzaga, Isabella was especially particular about the quality of the musicians and teachers at her new home, and when she could not find a satisfactory singing instructor in Mantua, she wrote to her father Duke Ercole about borrowing her former teacher Johannes Martini as there was no one in Mantua of his calibre:

> Illustrious Lord and Father: I want to study the rules of singing and, not having anyone here who would satisfy me as would Zohan Martino . . . [who] has taught me previously, I pray your Excellency to be so kind as to send him to me for fifteen or twenty days. (letter of August 30, 1490; in Prizer 1980, 12).

Martini came as requested, but as he was still in the Duke of Ferrara's employ, he searched for a suitable permanent replacement and thought he had found one in the young French singer and composer, Charles de Lannoy. Isabella wrote to her husband of this development in 1490:

> This evening I arrived here [in Sermide] safe and sound. Tomorrow I shall be in Sacchetta and the next day in Mantua, as your Excellency knows from another of my [letters]. Having had maestro Johannes Martini come to Mantua the other day to teach me singing, as your Excellency knows, I have taken great pleasure in this, since it appears to me a most laudable virtue. Now, to continue [my studies], I am bringing him back with me. But because he cannot remain there long, he brought with him a young Frenchman who has a good technique of singing and who would be good for the task because he is alone. If your Excellency approves, I should like to take him to stay with me. For this reason, I ask you to inform me of your wish [in this matter]" (letter of 10 December 1490, from Isabella d'Este to her husband Francesco Gonzaga; in Prizer 1985, 17).[7]

Charles de Lannoy did come to Mantua late in 1490 with Martini, but in 1491 he left suddenly and without permission to join the court at Florence, taking a precious music manuscript with him. That same year Isabella engaged the Ferrarese musician Girolamo Sestola to give her singing lessons, and after his return to Ferrara at the end of 1491 he remained a constant correspondent, but Isabella was again without a singing teacher who could equal Martini's reputation.

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[6] They also kept up their classical studies: Isabella engaged first the Mantuan scholar Sigismondo Golfo, and then the Ferraran Niccolo Panizzato, and continued to correspond with her former tutor Guarino. She also studied architecture after her marriage, writing in a letter to her husband Francesco Gonzaga in 1491, "I have begun to learn something about architecture. Thus, when your Excellency shall speak to me of your architectural projects, I shall be in a better position to understand" (in Brown 1997, 58).

[7] Prizer believes that the young Frenchman mentioned in this letter was not Charles Lannoy but some other French singer, whom de Lannoy replaced the following year (see Prizer 1999, 12-14).

In 1491, a year after Isabella moved to Mantua, her sister Beatrice finally married into the Sforza family (she had been engaged to Ludovico *Il Moro* since the age of five, but there had been many delays in setting the wedding date). As the wife of Ludovico Sforza, *Il Moro,* Beatrice became Duchess of Bari, and in 1494 became Duchess of Milan when the sickly Duke Giangaleazzo died and *Il Moro* was offered the Duchy in favour of his nephew's lawful heir. The Sforzas had become rulers of Milan by marrying into the older Visconti family in 1449, and although they were only young compared to the Gonzaga and Este dynasties, they quickly gained a reputation for military and cultural superiority. During *Il Moro*'s reign the wealth and extravagance of the Sforza court and the affluence of Milan and Pavia outshone even the Este and Gonzaga holdings.

Beatrice's birth and education had prepared her to preside over just such an illustrious court, and her youthful beauty and lively intelligence brought a new energy and vivacity to Milanese society. The contemporary chronicler Muralti described her soon after her arrival in Milan as "of youthful age, beautiful in face, and dark in colouring, fond of inventing new costumes, and of spending day and night in song and dancing and all manner of delights" (in Cartwright 1928, 65). At Milan, Beatrice surrounded herself with brilliant musicians and poets including her favourite singers Johannes Cordier and Giovanni Angelo Testagrossa who also taught her lute and *viola.* She had lutes, viols, clavichords and organs made by Atalante Migliorotti and Lorenzo Gusnasco da Pavia, in order to learn those instruments new to her and to become more proficient on those she already played. She introduced her sister to da Pavia's fine work, and upon seeing a "beautiful and flawless clavichord" which Lorenzo had made for Beatrice, Isabella became one of his most frequent and important customers.

Both Beatrice and Isabella learned the bowed *lira da braccio* after their marriage, and Beatrice may have received some lessons from not only her string player Testagrossa but also from Leonardo da Vinci who had come to Milan as a fine player of the *lira* in 1481 along with the renowned Florentine Atalante. During the summer of 1493, while the Duchess of Urbino was visiting Mantua, Isabella decided to take up the *lira* herself. She asked her Venetian agent Antonio Salimbene to find a small instrument (described as a 'cithara') suitable for her arm, and also wrote to Atalante asking him to send her a "bona cithara piccola per uso nostro" of as many strings as he chose. Though the intervening correspondence is lost, this might well be the silver *lyra* in the possession of Niccolò da Corregio which Isabella eventually borrowed.[8] Isabella had met Atalante in 1491 during his visit to Mantua in which he took the leading role in a performance of Polizianio's "Orfeo," and was well aware of the musician's skill in instrument-making. In addition to the bowed *lira da braccio*, the Marchesa learned plucked strings from her singer, lutenist, teacher and composer Bartolomeo Tromboncino, active at Isabella's Mantuan court from 1490 to 1505, and later was tutored by Testagrossa who came from Milan to Mantua as Isabella's lute teacher from 1495, and resided there permanently after Beatrice's death in 1497.

The continued interest Isabella and Beatrice d'Este showed in the latest musical styles and instruments stemmed from the Renaissance conception of personal improvement. Burckhardt remarks that "private education was first treated seriously" in humanist circles where an impetus to become a "many-sided man" was a significant feature of the "inward development of the individual" (Burckhardt 1990, 85, 87). Humanism has sometimes been seen as the exclusive province of the Renaissance man, impacting women's spheres only through its elevation of male hegemony; yet by virtue of their wealth, education and the very society they moved in, the leading ladies of the North Italian courts were no less influenced by their humanist upbringing than their brothers. The emphasis placed on individual intellectual and cultural development applied to women as well as men, and the duchesses who surrounded themselves with the most brilliant scholars, poets, artists and musicians in Italy looked for those men whose teaching and philosophy accorded with the most current intellectual movements.

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[8] Prizer discusses the generic usage of the term "cithara" which might refer to any waisted string instrument, plucked or bowed, and concludes that this is indeed a request for a *lira da braccio*. It might well be the same "lyra" which Isabella requests from Niccolò da Corregio later that summer. In her letter Isabella specifically requests an instrument by Atalante, for Corregio replies, apologizing for the delay in sending the instrument as it is packed among his effects being moved to Ferrara: "if Your Ladyship had not requested precisely the instrument of Atalante, I would have sent another that I have here, which, since it is somewhat smaller than this one, might have been more suitable for you. Nevertheless, use that of Atalante, which, with his name and the memory of him who gave it to you, will incline you to learn with more affection, since I am sure that you will learn quickly, given your native talent" (letter of July 8, 1493; in Prizer 1982, 107-108). Corregio's letter indicates the familiarity with and fondness for Atalante's work which Isabella already had. Isabella showed remarkable favour on the musician by standing as God-mother to Atalante's daughter, christened Isabella, in 1494.

The learning and practice of music suited the humanist idea of personal improvement in that it kept certain intellectual and physical skills honed, but it was also particularly suited to women for it produced a social refinement which a woman could display within the bounds of social decorum through musical performance and patronage. The other *bonae artes* of humanist study could produce no tangible consequence in a woman who was denied civic or political demonstration of her humanist learning. Speaking of the Veronese humanist Isotta Nogarola, Lisa Jardine remarks of her "continuing interest in the *studia humanitatis*," that "there was no public outlet for Isotta's secular training once she became a mature woman, and there never had been" (Jardine 1999, 59). Renaissance propaganda concluded that "virtue and right living are the direct products of fifteenth-century humanist studies," but for a woman this "virtue" entailed chastity and a modest withdrawing from active participation within the public sphere, while humanist learning in men precluded a civic context for their attained morality (Jardine 1999, 59). "Within the humanist confraternity," Jardine writes, "the accomplishment of the educated woman (the 'learned lady') is an end in itself, like fine needlepoint or the ability to perform ably on lute or virginals. It is not viewed as a training for anything, perhaps not even for virtue (except insofar as all these activities keep their idle hands and minds busy)" (Jardine 1999, 69).

The distinction between the noble, leisured pupil and the civically active humanist is not solely gender based, however, but is comparable for the leisure-oriented courtier as well for the lady: "for the nobleman also, who did not in practice earn a living or pursue a career, humanist learning provided the male equivalent of fine needlepoint or musical skill" (Jardine 1999, 70). But the acquisition of learning, and of musical skill, proved to be more than idle accomplishment for the daughters of the Este, Gonzaga and Sforza families. Just as humanist learning "provided the fictional identity of rank and worth on which the precarious edifice of the fifteenth-century Italian city-state's power structure depended" (Jardine 1999, 70), so it contributed value to a marriageable daughter who could speak and sing eloquently, or authority and prestige to a duchess who sought to establish a cultivated court of intellectuals and artisans.

As their attention to continued personal development (even after marriage) attests, Isabella and Beatrice d'Este considered themselves the intellectual and cultural equals of their brothers and husbands, and contributed to their identity as members of a renowned cultuvated, humanist family. Since the early fifteenth century when Lord Leonello d'Este, patron of painters, architects and humanist scholars, distinguished Ferrara as a centre of musical patronage, the Ferrarese court had occupied an exalted post as "the heart of the courtly civilization of the country" (Bellonci 171).[9] Upon Ercole's succession in 1471, the new Duke, soon joined by Duchess Eleanora d'Aragona (the daughter of the King of Naples), increased the level of musical activity at the court of Ferrara, implementing a "conscious attempt to make Ferrara a distinguished center for music" (Lockwood 1972, 107). The Duke concentrated his efforts on the more ostentatious musical establishment of the court chapel, which extolled the wealth and magnificence of Ercole's new rank with such commissions as Josquin's grand *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrarie* and rivalled the courts of Milan, Rome, France and Naples. While her husband's love of music was tinctured with political concerns, Eleanora's continued musical interests defined the course for the noblewoman's more intimate musical activities and ensured the musical education of her children. For Isabella and Beatrice, their continued musical involvement offered a prominent point of identification with a family renowned for its musical appreciation and artistic patronage; it signalled a conscious self-fashioning after a model established by their illustrious forebears.

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[9] Leonello founded one of the first court *cappella*s which he staffed with French singers and maintained throughout his reign of 1441-1450.

The shared love of music also connected Isabella and Beatrice with their family in a more personal way. As a family, the Estensi were prodigious patrons of poets, composers, and instrument makers, and they shared a passion for music and art.[10] Both Ercole d'Este and his wife Eleanora received a musical education at the court of Naples, and both were accomplished practitioners who performed for their own pleasure as befitted noble amateurs.[11] A court chronicler says of Ercole I that "every day, as was his custom, he sang and played" (in Lockwood 1972, 111-12), and Iain Fenlon notes of Ercole and Eleanora that "both were enthusiastic and discriminating patrons of the arts" (1989, 30). It is known that Ercole sang together with his sons and "took special pains in the education of his children, [ensuring that] everyone of them had musical training" (Lockwood 1972, 113). A letter of March 7, 1495, written by courtier Jacomo Gallino to Ferrante d'Este, details his younger brother Sigismondo's education. The letter reads, "his studies are in letters and music; your father takes great pleasure in hearing him and Don Julio, and in singing together with them" (in Lockwood 1972, 113). As well as performing with his sons, Ercole at times sang with the professional singers of his chapel. Duchess Eleanora played the harp, and may have accompanied or sung with her daughters in their private domestic setting. It is easy to imagine the whole family at times making music together or performing for each other's pleasure.

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[10] Each of Ercole and Eleanora's children became influential musicians and patrons. Their first-born, Isabella (1474-1539), Marchesa of Mantua from 1490, was a prodigious patron of the *frottola*, while Beatrice (1475-97), who married Ludovico Sforza *Il Moro*, becoming Duchess of Bari in 1491 and Duchess of Milan in 1494, kept a private group of musicians led by Johannes Cordier with whom she regularly travelled. Three sons established independent households, and all maintained associations with musicians, musical training and patronage: Alfonso (1476-1534), particularly fond of French music and musicians, added to the court *cappella* as the next Duke of Ferrara; Ippolito (1479-1520) was an accomplished viol player and kept his own distinguished household *cappella* as Cardinal of Ferrara – he was also an important patron of Italian instrumental music; Ferrante (1477-1549) remained actively connected to Ferrarese musical establishments until his life imprisonment in 1506, and aided the Estensi patronage of French music by obtaining music from the French composers Loyset Compère, Monsignor de Clarin and Josquin Desprez while in service of King Charles VIII; even the youngest brother, Sigismondo (1480-1524), although crippled with syphilis and retiring early to a life of pious prayer, is noted as making "important musical contributions" during his life, employing a music copyist and maintaining relationships with French music and musicians, particularly Mouton (Lockwood and Steib 2000, 709). Less is known about the musical contributions of the illegitimate Giulio (c.1473-1561) and Lucrezia (1471-after 1512). Both were brought up at court alongside their half-brothers and sisters, and given equal musical training and opportunity; however, there is little record of Lucrezia after her marriage to Annibale Bentivoglio of Bologna in 1487, and Giulio's public life was cut short by his imprisonment (along with Ferrante) for 53 years (1506-1559).

[11] Ercole lived at the court of Naples from the age of 14, from 1445-1462.

The practice of domestic family music-making which pervaded both the upper and middle classes is amply depicted in contemporary portraiture. Art historian E. H. Ramsden observes that "many musical scenes to be found in *cinquecento* painting . . . [are] concerned with the amateur pleasures of family life" (1983, 34). In his quest for the identities of the three men in a variously attributed portrait entitled *The Concert*, now hanging in the Pitti Palace, Florence, Ramsden surveys four sixteenth-century Italian paintings of family music-making. An anonymous Venetian painting described as *The Three Sisters* shows three well-dressed young ladies who "are obviously sisters" (Ramsden 1983, 34) posed against a pleasant, wooded landscape; the middle girl is playing a large lute and appears to be singing while one sister (on the right foreground) holds a single sheet of bold, legible music for the three to look on, and the other (on the left) holds the neck of a lute in her right hand, as if leaning on it. The rich fabric and style of their dress and hairpieces attest to their aristocratic family. In contrast, the plain and modest dress of four family musicians connotes a lower social status in *A Concert*, a portrait "of three generations, father, son and grandchildren, united in a common musical interest" (Ramsden 1983, 34). In the centre of the picture a girl holds a small sheet on which musical notes are barely discernible while her young brother looks on; the two are flanked by a middle-aged man who rests his right hand familiarly on the girl's shoulder and an older man who holds a recorder in his left hand.[12] Though music is the object of their attention, none of the family appears to be actively performing. In *A Concert* by Bernardino Licinio, a richly-dressed young woman plays a clavichord while an aging (and more modestly attired) man and woman look on. Ramsden comments that, despite more prurient interpretations, this may also be a family portrait, showing "a gifted only daughter with her elderly parents" (Ramsden 1983, 34).

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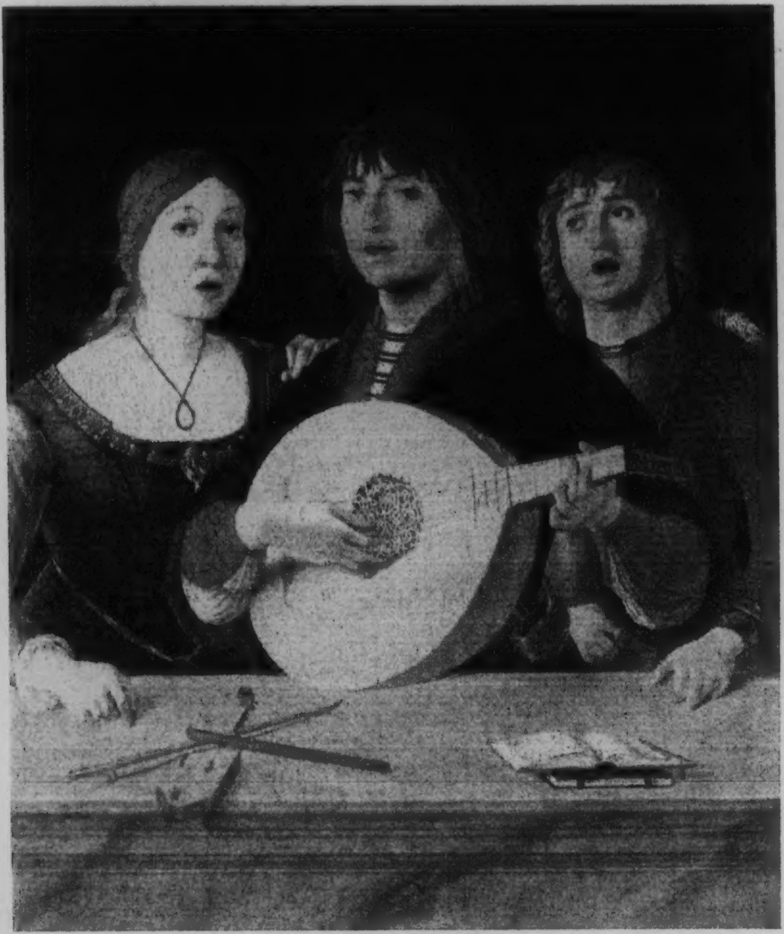
[12] Ramsden strongly denounces Einstein's identification of the middle-aged man as Verdelot and the older man as Willaert, as well as his ascription of the painting to Lorenzo Luzzo, claiming "there is no more reason to suppose that Einstein was right about the identity of the painter than about that of the two musicians, since he adduces no arguments in support of his contentions in either case" (Ramsden 1983, 33).

The most interesting of the four family portraits discussed by Ramsden is also entitled *A Concert*, and is now attributed to Lorenzo Costa (1460-1535).



Lorenzo Costa, *A Concert*
National Gallery, London; in Menuhin and Davis 1979, 82

This detailed depiction of two men and a woman singing to lute accompaniment has been reproduced in several music history texts and articles.[13] Although Howard Mayer Brown believes the picture to be of professional musicians (optimistically postulating that it might even be Marchetto Cara and his first wife Giovanna), Iain Fenlon describes it as characteristic of the north-Italian family portrait where "the performance of music serves as a metaphor for familial harmony" (Fenlon 1997, 204). Art historian E. H. Ramsden corroborates the latter theory, attesting that "the two men in the Costa *Concert* are brothers, here depicted, almost certainly with their sister" (1983, 34). Though potentially metaphorical, the *Concert*, which dates from Costa's Bolognese period (1485-1495) may simply represent the common domestic music-making which actually took place in many upper and middle-class Renaissance families. Of all the family concerts surveyed by Ramsden, Lorenzo Costa's pays the most attention to musical detail and accuracy: although the open partbook resting upon another closed music book, and the unused rebec and recorder resting on the marble ledge in front of the singers (perhaps an invitation to the viewer to join in the music-making) present a conventional composition, the posture of the three figures, their open mouths and facial expressions (especially of the brother on the right) and their hand positions —the lutenist properly fingering and plucking the instrument while the two singers tap time on the ledge— give a most realistic performance.

A possible clue to the identity of this family of musicians is found in the striking resemblance to three of the participants in Costa's labelled portrait of a music performance, *Concert with the children of Giovanni Bentivoglio II of Bologna* (Lugano, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection; reproduced in Bowers and Tick 1987, 73).[14] Costa's anonymous singers and lutenist look very much like Signora Bianca (Bentivoglio) Rangona, Monsignore Antongaleazzo Bentivoglio, and Hermes Bentivoglio, who appear in this second musical portrait singing around a large sheet of music. They are now joined by their brother Alessandro Bentivoglio, the court lady Signora Caterina Manfredi, an unknown courtier called "Pistano," two professional singers simply labelled "Cantore," the priest Prete Dalle Tovaglie, and Lorenzo Costa himself. Amateurs and professionals, courtiers and ruling family mix freely in this concert of vocal polyphony, where, curiously, only the women have their mouths closed and appear not to be singing, suggesting the performance of a sacred work (or perhaps that they are awaiting the entrance of their part). It would not be out of place to view the Bentivoglio siblings as representative of the typical musical activities of an Italian noble family, and one can easily imagine the Este and Gonzaga families engaged in similar domestic music-making.

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[13] Fenlon 1989, 134; Menuhin and Davis 1979, 82; Knighton and Fallows 1992, 203; Einstein 1949, 1:142).

[14] The most comprehensive anthology of Costa's paintings, Ranieri Varese's *Lorenzo Costa* (1967) makes no attempt to identify the three musicians of the National Gallery *Concerto*. However, it does not include a plate of the Lugano family *Concert*, and an earlier portrait of the Bentivoglio family, *Madonna dei Bentivoglio* by Lorenzo Costa, which shows eleven children ranging in ages from about three to fourteen, does not immediately present the same striking resemblances due to the young ages of the children.

As demonstrated by the Bentivoglio family portrait, noblewomen retained close ties to their parents and siblings even after marriage, especially as it concerned their musical activities. It is interesting to note that Bianca Bentivoglio, married by this time and known by her husband's name, Rangona, is still included in the family concert portrayed by Lorenzo Costa. Even after their separation due to marriage and careers, the Este family continued to share their musical interests; they constantly exchanged musicians and instruments on loan, kept each other informed of the latest trends and musical activities, and continued to play and sing together when they visited one another. Surviving correspondence details a typical exchange of musicians between the Este sisters: Isabella wrote to Beatrice asking her to allow Jacopo di San Secondo, Beatrice's favourite violist, to spend a few weeks at Mantua in the summer of 1493. The musician was duly sent, for by July Beatrice was asking for his return: "since you are back at Mantua, I think you will not want Jacopo di San Secondo much longer, and beg you to send him back to Pavia as soon as possible, since his music will be a pleasure to my husband, who is suffering from a slight attack of fever" (in Cartwright 1928, 152). Iain Fenlon notes that ruling *famiglia* often "encouraged a circulation of artists, musicians, writers and their work" in order to strengthen the ties between the ruling houses and the wider branches of the aristocracy (Fenlon 1980, 30). Another example illustrates the lending of musicians between more distantly related noble households. When Isabella wrote to the Marchese of Casale inquiring after the return of her singers, including Tromboncino, whom she had lent to him in May 1499 for a specific *festa*, he replied:

> The singers of your Ladyship who are here have asked permission to return to you. We were not able to allow this because we are in the process of having a comedy performed in which it is necessary that these [singers] take part in order to sing some verses that were composed for them. We ask your Ladyship to be pleased to accept their explanation when they arrive because we have kept them there to do this. (Letter of 7 June, 1499, from Marchese Guglielmo Paleologo of Casale to Isabella d'Este; in Prizer 1985, 16-17).

The loan of singers or instruments exemplified the affluence, generosity and good-will of the donor, but also encouraged the diffusion of musical style and fashion throughout Italy. The Este siblings' exchange of instruments, detailed in a letter from Isabella to her half-brother Giulio of 14 May 1499 attests to this circulation of new musical trends, as well as to a healthy sibling rivalry. Isabella alludes to Alfonso's recent interest in the viol, a fashionable new instrument currently being introduced from Spain: Alfonso ordered five viols in various sizes from Lorenzo da Pavia in March of 1499, in order to learn to play them, and actually did play with a consort of viols during the week-long celebration of his wedding to Lucrezia Borgia in 1502.[15] In her letter, Isabella indicates that she intends to keep up with her brother in this new trend: "we have begun to learn the viola and we hope that we learn well, because in the two days that we have been working, we have begun to plan that, when we come to Ferrara, we will be able to play tenor to Don Alfonso" (in Prizer 1982, 104).

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[15] The usage of the term *viole* in sixteenth-century literature is, as William Prizer and Ian Woodfield have both pointed out, somewhat problematic: the term can refer to any waisted, stringed instrument, including a bowed viol rested on the arm (a *viola da arco*, Medieval-type fiddle or *lira da braccio*), any kind of early guitar (a *viola de mano*, or *vihuela*), or a form of the bowed viol held between the legs—later popularly known as *viola da gamba*. The *viola* ordered from Lorenzo da Pavia by Alfonso and Isabella's sister Beatrice in 1496, for instance, was most likely one of the former two types of instruments, whereas the consort of instruments ordered by Alfonso has been clearly identified as the *da gamba* type. According to Woodfield, the viols now associated with a Renaissance consort, commonly referred to as '*viole grande*' and '*violoni*' or '*viole da archo*', were first introduced from Spain into Italy at the end of the fifteenth century under the influence of the Borgia family, which may explain Alfonso's sudden interest in the instrument leading up to his wedding to Lucrezia Borgia (Woodfield, 1976-77; Prizer 1982).

Isabella had previously purchased some viols —the earliest known viols of Italian make— and received them in 1495 from an unnamed maker in Brescia. In 1499 she completed the consort, ordering a fourth "viola grande" from the same maker. These Brescian instruments may have remained in the hands of her musician 'Giovanni Angelo' to whom they were first given (Prizer concludes "this can only be Giovanni Angelo Testagrossa," [Prizer, 1982, 103]), for in August of 1499 Isabella borrowed some viols from Alfonso, as well as requesting the use of "three perfect *viole*" from Galeotto del Carretto at Casale Monferrato.[16] Interestingly, even though Isabella had owned three viols since 1495, she did not take a practical interest in the viol until 1499. It was only upon hearing of her brother's interest in performance that she determined to learn to play them herself —the woman who would later be cited as a "trend-setter" in a Papal bull could not be left behind by her sibling's musical development.[17] Family traditions of patronage and performance, along with rivalry among family members provided significant motivation for the continued development of musical tastes and skills.

The Function of Music in the Lives of the Northern Duchesses

In the lives of the northern duchesses, their families and friends, music functioned primarily as a delightful accompaniment to courtly pleasures, as often performed by aristocratic ladies and courtiers themselves as by the hired musicians of their households. In *Il Cortegiano* the evenings of witty conversation end with music and dancing:

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[16] This request contained in a letter from Isabella to Carretto, 23 August 1499, is partially transcribed in Prizer 1982, along with the correspondence between Isabella d'Este and her agent Marco Nigro which traces the purchase history of the Brescian viols, and letters from Lorenzo da Pavia concerning Alfonso's order. Although he discusses the nature of these instruments, concluding that they were indeed *viole da arco*, played *da gamba*, Prizer does not address whether the Brescian viols were returned to and played by Isabella in 1499 or used strictly by the musicians in her employ, causing her to borrow others for herself.

[17] In the papal edict of 1564 which calls her a "trend-setter," Pope Pius IV blames Isabella for popularizing the habit of travelling in Rome by coach, which resulted in subsequent traffic problems.

> Then Calmeta said: 'Gentlemen, since the hour is late and in order that messer Federico may have no excuse for not telling what he knows, I think it would be well to put off the rest of this discussion until tomorrow, and let the brief time that remains be spent in some other more modest entertainment.'
>
> When everyone agreed, the Duchess desired that madonna Margherita and madonna Costanza Fregosa should dance. Whereupon Barletta, a delightful musician and an excellent dancer, who always kept the court amused, began to play upon his instruments; and the two ladies, joining hands, danced first a *basso*, and then a *roegarze* with extreme grace, much to the delight of those who watched. Then, the night being already far spent, the Duchess rose to her feet, whereupon everyone reverently took leave and retired to sleep. (Castiglione 1959, 85-86)

By closing the first book of his *Cortegiano* with music and dancing, Castiglione is perpetuating a literary tradition after Boccaccio's model, for in the *Decameron*, each day of story-telling closes with music and dancing. The first day closes with Emilia singing while the others dance:

> After supper, instruments were sent for, and the queen decreed that a dance should begin, which Lauretta was to lead whilst Emilia was to sing a song, accompanied on the lute by Dioneo. No sooner did she hear the queen's command than Lauretta promptly began to dance, and she was joined by the others, whilst Emilia sang the following song in amorous tones:
>
> 'In mine own beauty take I such delight
> That to no other love could I
> My fond affections plight. . . .
>
> (Boccaccio 1972, 113)

Again the literary convention both mirrors reality and significantly influences the shape of courtly entertainment. Like the ten "most agreeable and gently bred" women and men of Boccaccio's *Decameron,* the ladies and courtiers of the northern courts in the late-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were musically educated, not merely to become appreciative listeners and patrons of music, but to perform themselves. Castiglione numbers music among the necessary arts and accomplishments for both courtier and lady, and advocates the benefits of music performance to "fill his leisure when alone with pleasurable occupation, and to furnish his share of delightful pastimes in company" (Kelso 1956, 213):

> Gentlemen, you must know that I am not satisfied with our Courtier unless he be also a musician, and unless, besides understanding and being able to read music, he can play various instruments. For, if we rightly consider, no rest from toil and no medicine for ailing spirits can be found more decorous or praiseworthy in time of leisure than this; and especially in courts where, besides the release from vexations which music gives to all, many things are done to please the ladies, whose tender and delicate spirits are readily penetrated with harmony and filled with sweetness. Hence, it is no wonder that in both ancient and modern times they have always been particularly fond of musicians, finding music a most welcome food for the spirit. (Castiglione 1959, 74)

Similarly, a lady must " have knowledge of letters, of music, of painting, and know how to dance and how to be festive, adding a discreet modesty and the giving of a good impression of herself to those other things that have been required of the Courtier" (Castiglione 1959, 211-12). There were many accomplished performers among the noblewomen of Ferrara, Urbino, Mantua and Milan, not the least of which were the duchesses themselves. The list of instruments that Isabella and her sister played —*lira da braccio*, clavichord, lute, *vihuela,* cithara, *liuto spagnolo*, viol— is long and impressive, even by Castiglione's standard, and it contains all the musical instruments thought appropriate for a lady's gender and station.

The performance opportunities undertaken by the northern duchesses also conformed to the protocols of courtly society described in *Il Cortegiano*. Castiglione emphasizes music's function as an adornment of the courtier, which gives it a particular affiliation with the role of the court lady. Music is seen as an "ornament" which provides "sweetness," "grace," and "delight" to the court, in much the same way as the court lady is expected to do so (Castiglione 1959 105). Hence a capability in music performance enhanced a lady's identity as *padrona* and *musa* of the court. These ladies never performed in the theatre or public square like paid musicians, but only in the intimate surroundings of her court *familia*: a description of Beatrice playing the clavichord after dinner one evening cites her husband and the Ferrarese ambassador in attendance, presumably along with other select members of their court (letter of Girolamo Bruno, 5 May, 1491; in Merkley 1999, 422). A similar evening performance by Isabella, this time at the Ferrarese court, finds the Marchesa performing a *capitolo* to lute accompaniment only after she is repeatedly urged by her companions, conforming to Castiglione's directive toward modesty: "hence, when she starts to dance or to make music of any kind, she ought to begin by letting herself be begged a little, and with a certain shyness bespeaking a noble shame that is the opposite of brazenness" (Castiglione 1959, 210). In both instances the performance functions to highlight the talent of the Este women and to delight the courtiers who hear them.

Most firmly entrenched in the sixteenth-century consciousness was the use of music as a pastime to lighten the leisure hours of the ladies and their personal court. Singing was a favourite activity of Beatrice d'Este: she often sang solos with lute or clavichord accompaniment, and even sang polyphonic songs with the ladies and gentlemen of her court. The description of a typical country outing, related in a letter by Galeazzo Sanseverino to Isabella d'Este displays Beatrice singing along with the gallant courtier Sanseverino and her favourite court jester Dioda, for her own relaxation and pleasure:

> I started at ten o'clock with the Duchess (Beatrice) and all of her ladies on horseback to go to Cussago, and in order to let your Highness enter fully into our pleasures, I must tell you that first of all I had to ride in a carriage with the Duchess and Dioda, and as we drove we sang more than twenty-five songs, arranged for three voices. That is to say, Dioda took the tenor part, and the Duchess the soprano, whilst I sang sometimes bass and sometimes soprano, and played so many foolish tricks that I really think I may claim to be more of a fool than Dioda!"[18] (letter of 11 Feb 1491; in Cartwright 1928, 81)

In a second letter, Galeazzo describes the rest of their day which was taken up with fishing, playing ball, touring the beautiful country palace of Cussago, picnicking and hunting (for birds with falcons, and for deer), adding that "one thing only was wanting to our pleasure, and that was the sweet company of yourself, fair Madonna Marchesana" (in Cartwright 1928, 83). During this typical pastoral excursion, music functions as part of the pleasurable leisure activities of the court. As Paul and Lora Merkley assert, "the singing of polyphony was a skill and passtime [*sic*] practiced by the rulers and some of their courtiers" (Merkley 1999, 423).

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[18] Dioda, or Diodata da Ferrara, was a favourite jester in Beatrice's court who came to Milan in the Duchess's Ferrarese entourage. Galeazzo di Sanseverino (d. 1525) was a military captain in the service of Ludovico il Moro, a favourite courtier at Beatrice's court and the husband of Ludovico's natural daughter Bianca; he was renowned for his chivalrous conduct and prowess at jousting and other knightly exercises, was a regular correspondent with Isabella d'Este, and is praised in Castiglione's *Libro di Cortegiano*.

Outdoor polyphonic singing also maintained for the courtier a connection with pastoral or rustic entertainment. An *intermedi* of 1517 calls for "a choir of four rustics, that is two men and two women" to sing *frottole a cappella* in the second interlude of a tragedy by Jacopo del Legname da Treviso (in Rubsamen 1943, 32). The epic poem *Baldus* (1517) by Teofilio Folengo (known as Merlinus Coccaius, 1496-1544) describes the wandering peasant Baldus and his three friends singing together as they ride on a journey, "Quattuor in voce post haec cantare comenzant / . . . Cantabant, nam sic facientes tempora passant" (in Dent 1990, 33-34). Poems like Folengo's and many song texts as well connect the pleasant pastime of polyphonic singing with travel, peasant life or, most abundantly, simply with nature—

> Pleasant hills, sunlit slopes, fresh fountains, and delightful shores, green meadows adorned with flowers, which give the heart, thinking of you, delight and life, thickets sheltering singing birds that make martyrs of lonely souls, how gladly would I be among you if only my nymph were there as well. (Ludovico Milanese, *Ameni colli*; in Petrucci, *Frottole libro VIII*, 1507)

Similarly, contemporary paintings frequently connect pastoral elements with aristocratic polyphonic singing. The oft-reproduced sixteenth-century portrait of an idyllic alfresco vocal quartet, *The Concert in the Country: The Song* (Anonymous, Musée de l'Hotel Lallemant, Bourges; reproduced in Grout & Palisca, 1996, plate IV, and on the cover of *Early Music America* 5/4, Winter 1999-2000), depicts three aristocratic women and one man singing from part books in an scenic pastoral setting. While for the month of April, *The Group of Lovers* (Francesco del Cosa, 1470, from the *Schifanoia Months* at Ferrara) which adorns the Schifanoia summer palace at Ferrara displays courtiers and ladies gathering outdoors with lutes and recorders for amorous music making.

In the particular instance of Beatrice's ride to Cussago, singing is treated not as a sophisticated art form or an accomplishment to be displayed and admired, but merely as a game or amusing diversion. The use of song to pass the time on a tedious journey is illustrated on another occasion by Isabella sending her poet and musician Picenardi with his lyre to meet Elisabetta Gonzaga at Revere and journey back with her to Mantua "in order that he might beguile the journey with music and song" in anticipation of the pleasant time the two friends would spend together (Cartwright 1903, 69). Yet the particular performance of polyphonic song on Beatrice's country outing lends an even livelier air to the party. Unlike an attending minstrel's tunes which might be considered mere background music, or a duchess's solo performance with lute accompaniment to which the present courtiers would be compelled to listen attentively, the more participatory style of polyphonic singing lends an engaging, jocular atmosphere to the occasion: the segregation of the three companions in the carriage apart from the other ladies on horseback, and the simple nature of the three-part songs here allows Galeazzo to approach the music with charming irreverence, singing bass, tenor or soprano as he pleases, and playing such musical "tricks" that he out-fools the court fool.

Whether sung *a cappella* or as a solo to lute accompaniment, the performance of light-hearted folk lyrics or elegant courtly love songs by the leading ladies of the northern courts was an entirely appropriate activity, for the court lady, like music, was perceived as an ornament of the court, and noblewomen often chose to cultivate this image for themselves. Castiglione describes the perfect Lady as an adornment of the court and a complement to the courtier, saying,

> no court, however great, can have adornment or splendor or gaiety in it without ladies, neither can any Courtier be graceful or pleasing or brave, or do any gallant deed of chivalry, unless he is moved by the society and by the love and charm of ladies: even discussion about the Courtier is always imperfect unless ladies take part in it and add their part of that grace by which they make Courtiership perfect and adorned. (Castiglione 1959, 204-205)

Constance Jordan claims that, "ostensibly devoted to constructing an image of the ideal court lady, the text actually reveals its author's analysis of his courtiers' strategies for controlling all the women of the court, particularly the most powerful of them, Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino" (Jordan 1990, 76). The function of the court Lady can only be defined in relationship to the courtier, she exists to adorn the court, and through her charm and grace to inspire the courtier to gallant deeds. It is a relationship which "does not offer women the 'freedom' to create the terms upon which they live," but rather "restricts them within existing conventions" (Jordan 1990, 79). Yet in describing the court Lady as a necessary object of adornment, Castiglione defines a relationship which while placing restricting conventions on an aristocratic woman's actions, nevertheless offers a level of unlimited influence over the private sphere of the court. "To each it was permitted to speak, sit, jest, and laugh with whom he pleased," writes Castiglione of the company gathered in the Duchess's rooms, "but the reverence that was paid to the wishes of the Duchess was such that this same liberty was a very great check" (Castiglione 1959, 16). Ultimately, the Duchess wields an unspoken power with which she chooses to uphold courtly decorum. Her very decision to act within expected convention earns the respect of, and fuels her influence over the courtiers in attendance, placing her in a position of power and authority which she then outwardly declines while strengthening her reputation as a praiseworthy *madonna*. The role which Duchess Elisabetta plays in *Il Cortegiano*'s conversations at once proclaims her governor of the social life of the court and denies her active participation in the proceedings; the conversation itself alludes to this juxtaposition of acknowledged authority and inaction, describing the courtly Lady as a hypothetical creature of unattainable virtues and graces, yet praising the Duchess and her chief *dame d'honneur*, Emilia Pia, as the perfect embodiment of these coveted attributes.

Despite the seeming restriction of such a position, many noblewomen of family and position openly embraced their role as ornament and caretaker of culture within the court, seeking through conformity to societal convention to construct a lasting and memorable identity as a woman of virtue and influence. Their attitude towards music reflects the conventional function of music performance as a pleasurable pastime for the courtly lady. Elisabetta Gonzaga, for example, closely aspired to the Renaissance ideal for which she was immortalized in Castiglione's popular conduct book. Her fondness for music and singing is illustrated in a letter of 4 September, 1503, from Lorenzo da Pavia to Isabella d'Este: "Marchetto and Giovanna [Cara] have arrived, and truly her Excellency the Duchess [of Urbino, Elisabetta Gonzaga] takes the greatest pleasure in them; they sing so beautifully that blessed are they who hear them; the Venetians conclude that they have never heard better" (in Prizer 1980, doc. 16). Walter Rubsamen observes of Elisabetta that "she and her courtiers were extremely fond of music in all its forms, especially that heard in conjunction with theatrical representations" (Rubsamen 1943, 34). On one specific occasion in 1506, the Duchess and her court were entertained by a dramatic performance of Castiglione's Eclogue *Tirsi*, in which Castiglione and his cousin Cesare Gonzaga (ca.1475-1512), both dressed as shepherds, recited the Eclogue and sang *canzonetti* set by Bartolomeo Tromboncino (his setting of *Queste lacrime mie, questi sospiri* was subsequently printed in a number of *frottola* collections, including Petrucci, Bk XI). Cartwright notes that the young Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga, who frequently suffered from ill health, often spent relaxing summers with her friend Isabella d'Este at one of the Gonzaga summer houses, where they would amuse themselves with music and games: "the two young princesses constantly sang and played together" (Cartwright 1903, 85).

In addition to expressing a heartfelt appreciation for fine singing, Elisabetta possessed enough musical skill herself to "merit the praise of all who were privileged to hear her" (Rubsamen 1943, 33).[19] Of Elisabetta's own performance, a poem by Baldassare Castiglione, *De Elisabella Gonzaga canente,* describes the Duchess of Urbino singing the *lamento di Didone* from the Aeneid, in hyperbolic terms:[20]

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[19] Rubsamen mistakenly calls the Duchess of Urbino "Elisabeth d'Este," instead of Gonzaga and "sister" rather than sister-in-law of Isabella d'Este.

[20] Following the Castiglione scholar Vittorio Cian and Ferrarese chroniclers Luzio and Renier I here treat this poem as a tribute to the Duchess of Urbino; however, Prizer makes an impressive argument that the poem is in fact dedicated to Isabella d'Este, who herself owned a copy of the poem (Prizer 1999, 38-43), a view shared by music historians Benedetto Disertori,

"Remnants dear to me, while god and fate allowed it,"
As long as she sings, and plays the plaintive ivory with her finger,
The beautiful Elisa brings down her sound from heaven
And draws the wild beast to her virtuous words.
The long-eared underwood will come at her beloved songs,
From everywhere the rocks will hasten down from the high ridges.
(Trans. Prizer 1999, 40)[21]

Perhaps this performance was of the setting by Philippi de Lurano, *Dissimulare etiam*, later printed in Petrucci's eighth book of frottole (1507), or one of the versions by Josquin, de Orto, Verbonet, and Mouton (as suggested by Prizer). Maybe Elisabetta and her friends also sang Tromboncino's setting of Dido's letter to Aeneas, *Aspicias utinam quae sit scribenis imago* (Ovid, Her. VII, 183) printed in 1516, or the extant anonymous setting of *Dulces exuviae* from book IV of the Aeneid, published in 1519, which Prizer and Luisi attribute to Marchetto Cara (Prizer 1999, 39-44).

Pietro Bembo gives a lasting impression of Elisabetta's court at Urbino which could easily include music among the many lighthearted activities which occupied her household: in a letter to a friend in Rome of 1507 Bembo writes, "there is little to say about our doings here; but we laugh, we jest, we play games, we invent new tricks and practical jokes, we feast and study, and now and then we write poetry. If I had more time, which I have not today, I would send you a proof of this in a beautiful *canzone* which my dear M. Baldassare Castiglione has composed during the last few days" (in Prescott 1969, 272). Several of Castiglione's *canzonette* and sonnets were set to music, including *Cantai, mentre nel cor lieto fioria* set by Marchetto Cara.[22] Elisabetta's informed

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Francesco Luisi and Alfred Einstein.

[21] Dulces exuviae, dum fata Deusque sine bant,
Dum canit, et querulum pollice tangit ebur,
Formosa e caelo deducit Elisa tonantem,
Et trahit immites ad pia verba teras.
Auritae veniunt ad dulcia carmina silvae,
Decurrent altis undique saxo iugis.
(In Disertori 1964, 32)

[22] Prizer suggests that this song was performed by Isabella d'Este in Pozuolo for the Marchese of Bitonto, Francesco Aquaviva, as alluded to in a letter from Aquaviva of May 24,

patronage of secular vocalists and instrumentalists (Marchetto Cara and Bidon of Asti are cited in *Il Libro di Cortegiano* as exceptionally moving vocalists who graced the court of Urbino, and the pipe and tabour player and dancing instructor Barletta was a permanent member of Elisabetta's household; Castiglione 1959, 60 & 86), her unassuming participation in musical performance and the carefree attitude toward the courtly exercises of poetry and music exhibited at her court display a realm of coveted virtues —generosity, intelligence, artistic inclination, modesty, leisure and wealth— all of which contribute to Elisabetta's construction of self-identity as an exemplary *domina* of the court— a woman worthy to be included in the poetic lists of praiseworthy women.

Of the Este princesses, Beatrice, much more than her sister, took pleasure in the role of a duchess who ornamented her husband's court, and her patronage and performance of music served to uphold this relationship. Her own musical performance reflected a desire not only for personal enjoyment but to please those who listened, including her husband. A letter from the Ferrarese ambassador Girolamo Bruno to Duchess Eleanora in Ferrara describes Ludovico's reaction to his wife's playing upon one such occasion:

> The other evening, which was Wednesday, I could not stop the tears from coming to my eyes when I heard the duke say a few words, while the Duchess [of Bari, Beatrice] played the clavichord that I had brought her, and sitting close to him, I heard his words, which were these: 'O, if my father were alive, he and my mother would admire my wife so much that I am sure they would not let her feet touch the ground'. And after she had played, he stood up, embraced her, kissed her, and said, 'I can call myself the happiest man in the world'. (Letter of 5 May, 1491; in Merkley 1999, 422)

When singing or playing the lute or harpsichord for family and select courtiers, Beatrice displayed her own skill not for any political agenda but as a reflection of her refined education and as an extension of her identity as a graceful lady of the court. She performed in intimate court settings, and on country outings —at those times that

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1515 where he declares, "you have forgotten to send me the song that begins 'Cantai' as you promised me; I am very fond of it, principally as a souvenir of that evening in Pozuolo" (in Prizer 1999, 27).

Castiglione would later define as the proper occasion for a courtier's performance; she also performed for important visitors. A document of 1494 records how she travelled to Annona with her choir and musicians as usual, to meet King Charles VIII of France on his way to Milan, and during the theatrical and musical entertainments given there Beatrice showed her favour upon the King by dancing for him with her ladies.

Although some of her other habits —her love of the dangerous sports of hunting and riding, and her penchant for practical jokes— might have earned Castiglione's disapprobation, Beatrice's love of music always manifested itself in ways considered appropriate for her gender and social standing. Music functioned for her as a pleasurable pastime while in gentle company, and she also employed private chamber singers for personal consolation and spiritual enrichment, perhaps enjoying or herself performing the gentle spiritual cadences of the devotional *lauda*, the religious counterpart of the *frottola.* Reports from physicians on the recuperation of both Beatrice, the new Duchess of Bari, and her rival at the Milanese court the Duchess Isabella d'Aragona of Milan, recount two similar instances of the use of personal musicians at the female courts in the Milanese Ducal palace. Writing to Governor Ludovico *Il Moro*, on August 2, 1491, Isabella's attendant physician reports, "today she was well all day, taking various pleasures, having pleasant things read to her and having musicians play and Andrea Cossa [Italian lutenist, composer and singer] sing" (in Merkley 1999, 422). The next day again she was feeling better and the physician found her "taking recreation, sometimes having people read to her, sometimes having musicians play and Andrea Cossa sing" (letter of August 3, 1491; in Merkley 1999, 422). The household musicians in the service of Beatrice d'Este likewise helped to pass the time especially during recuperation from illness: "she feels she is no longer sick," writes Beatrice's physician at Vigevano to Ludovico, on October 27, 1492, "and sometimes she calls for singers, sometimes messer Hieronimo del Bramo, and at other times the viol players, and thus she passes the time" (in Merkley 1999, 422).

Of the household musicians in Beatrice's employ, her favourite singers Johannes Cordier and Angelo Testagrossa provided both secular and sacred vocal music.

Beatrice's biographical details reveal a lively, fun-loving young woman, eager to play practical jokes, relishing theatrical spectacle and musical entertainment, with a fine appreciation of the latest styles in music, poetry and art, and an even keener eye for fine fabrics, jewels and fashions. But even for this secular princess, the spiritual enlightenment which music afforded her was an integral element of the function of music in her daily life. Of the chapel singers who sang daily mass for the ducal household, Beatrice writes, "I felt the greatest spiritual delight in hearing them, Messer Cordier as usual doing his part very well, as he did also yesterday morning. Certainly his singing is the greatest consolation possible" (letter of May 27, 1493; in Cartwright 1928, 192). Castiglione concurs that a spiritual enjoyment of music is appropriate for the courtier, since "you find it [music] used in sacred temples to give praise and thanks to God, and we must believe that it is pleasing to Him, and that He has given it to us as a sweet respite from our toils and vexations" (Castiglione 1959, 76). Beatrice delighted in her court singers not merely for the entertainment pleasure of their voices but for their ability to draw her into a reflective spiritual mood which uplifted her soul. She also took pride in the chapel singers of the Milanese *cappella* as an extension of the Duke's magnificence, delighting when their singing reflected the excellence of their master: "and our singers did their part, and their singing greatly pleased both the Prince and all who were present, especially that of Cordier, who always takes great pains to do honour to your Highness" (letter of May 30, 1493; in Cartwright 1928, 199).

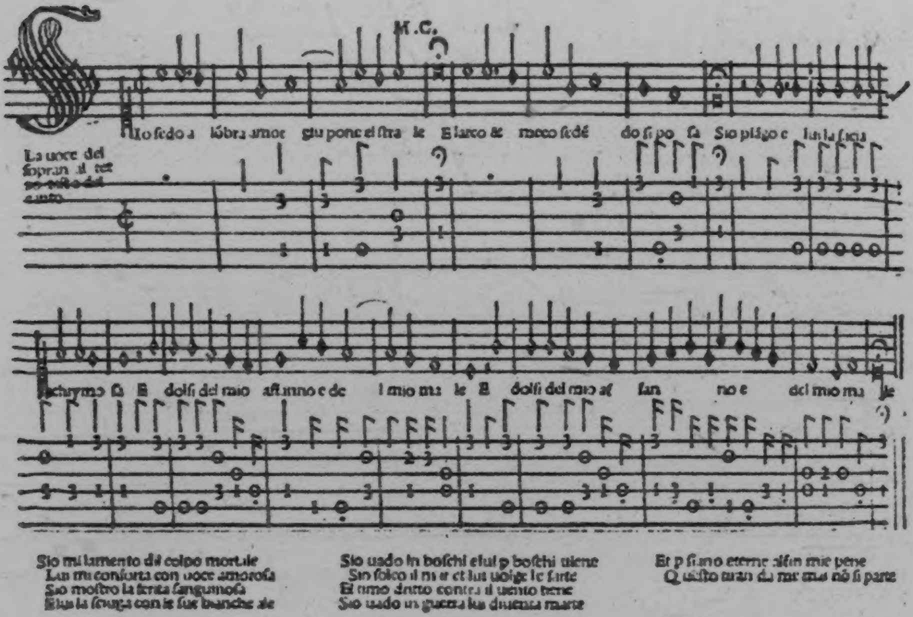
Although Beatrice's keen appreciation of fine singing possessed a significant spiritual dimension, the occasions of her own performance in company attest to a more worldly musical function, especially her singing with Galezazzo Sanseverino and the court jester Dioda. On the surface, secular pleasures appear to motivate not only Beatrice and Elisabetta but the renowned Isabella d'Este as well. Iain Fenlon writes that "for Isabella, music was, above all, a secular social activity in which she was able to participate, an art to be practiced as entertainment rather than merely listened to or promoted as an elaboration of the liturgy" (Fenlon 1989, 31). For many of the Italian duchesses, Fenlon's description of music as "an art to be practiced as entertainment" is extremely apt; certainly, this was the most obvious function of music in the court lady's world. But examination of a performance by Isabella d'Este reveals that for this strong political personality the function of music was not so one sided or clear cut.

Just as Beatrice danced for the King of France, a noble lady could be persuaded to perform at special functions and for important guests, although Castiglione urges caution when performing outside the intimate confines of the ducal family: "there are certain other exercises that can be practiced in public and in private, such as dancing. And in this I think the Courtier should take great care . . . when dancing in the presence of many and in a place full of people" (Castiglione 1959, 102). Isabella performed in mixed company only occasionally, and her reputation as a highly accomplished musician elevated these infrequent performances to the status of treasured gifts bestowed upon the favoured few. Pietro Bembo, the Marchese of Bitonto, Niccolo da Corregio, Girolamo Casio, Antonio Tebaldeo, Andrea Cossa and Giangiorgio Trissino all counted it a rare privilege to hear this celebrated princess sing, and praised the beauty of her voice and her playing, raising Isabella's poetically recounted performance to the height of myth:

> I have heard her voice, which, in the words of Petrarch, is a thing *chiara, soave, angelica e divina.* When she sings, especially to the lute, I believe that Orpheus and Amphion, who knew how to bring inanimate objects to life with their song, would be stupefied with wonder on hearing her, and I do not doubt that neither of them would have known how to do as well as she does in keeping the harmony most diligently so that the rhythm never falters, but rather measures the song, now rising, now falling, and keeps the harmony on the lute and at once according her tongue and both hands with the inflections of the song. Thus if you were to hear her sing even a single time, I am certain that you would be like those who heard the Sirens and forgot their native lands and their own homes. (Trissino, *I ritratti*, 1513-14; in Cartwright 1903, 104)

For the politically-minded Isabella, flattering descriptions of her beauty and talent were welcome support of her identity as *la prima donna del mondo*, however she might dissemble: Isabella wrote to Trissino in 1514 thanking him for his dedication, and acknowledging his flattery saying, "I know that you are not telling the truth, but still it pleases me" (in Prizer 1989, 145).

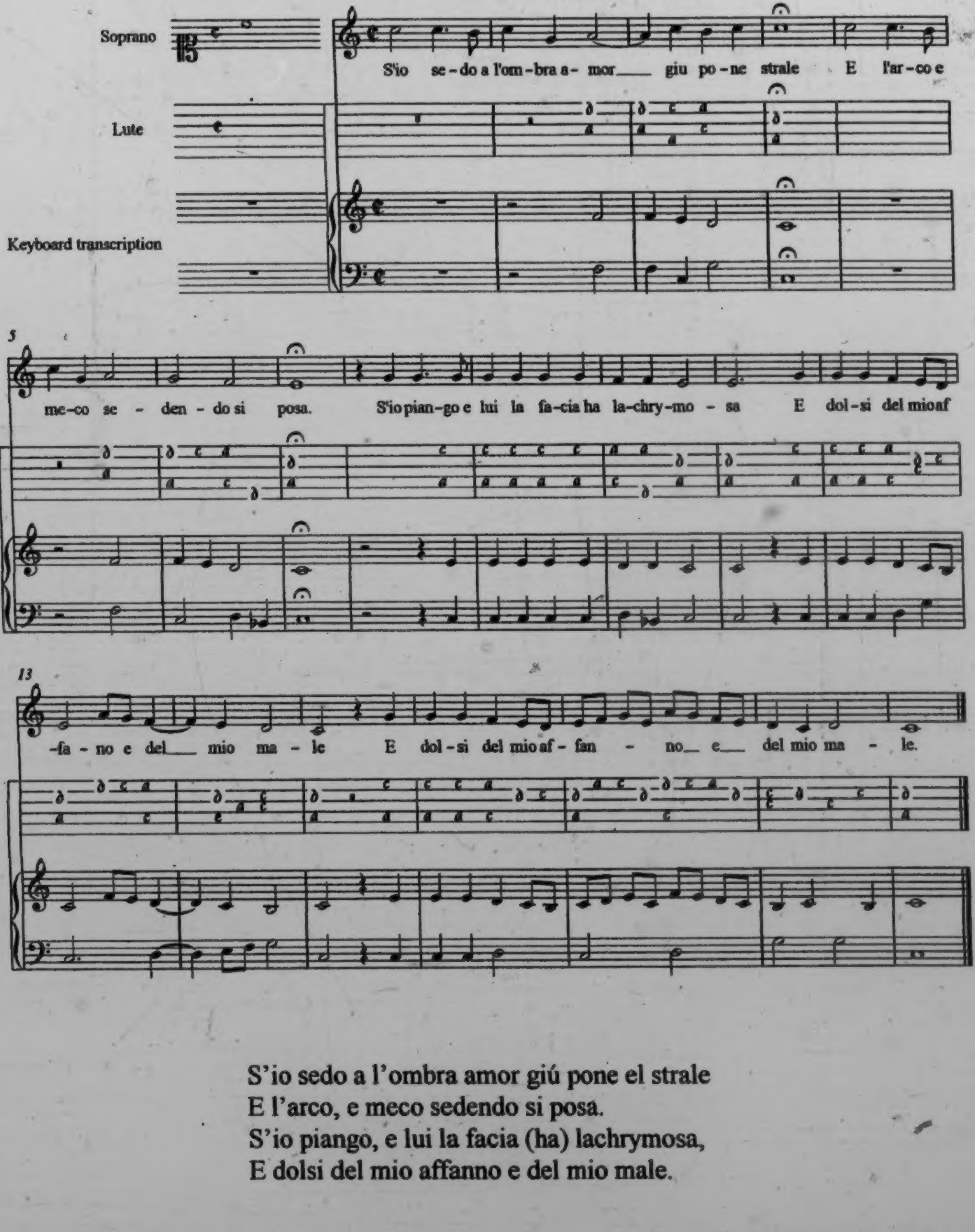
Isabella's most well known performance occurred in 1502 when she danced and sang to lute accompaniment before carefully chosen guests during the wedding festivities of her brother Alfonso and Lucrezia Borgia. The incident is recorded in her own hand in a letter to her husband Francesco who did not attend the wedding, as well as by eyewitnesses. Isabella herself mentions simply that she "cantar in lo lauto" (letter of February 7, 1502; in Fenlon 1980, 169); however, the Marchesa of Crotone reports that Isabella sang "two sonnets and a *capitolo*" (letter of February 6, 1502; in Prizer 1985, 6), perhaps of the type regularly set for her by Tromboncino or Cara.



Facsimile of *S'io sedo a l'ombra amor* by Marchetto Cara
Arranged for voice and lute by Franciscus Bossinensis
From Bossinensis Lute Book II; Disertori 1956

Marchetto Cara's setting of the sonnet *S'io sedo a l'ombra amor*, arranged for voice and lute by Franciscus Bossinensis and published by Petrucci in the second of Bossinensis's popular lute song books, *Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato per cantar e sonar col lauto. Libro secondo* (1509), provides an interesting example of a lute-song reminiscent of the older *recitare* tradition.

Example 1. *S'io sedo a l'ombra amor* by Marchetto Cara
Arranged for lute and voice by Franciscus Bossinensis


Soprano
Lute
Keyboard transcription
5
13
S'io se-do a l'om-bra a- mor giu po-ne strale E l'ar-co e me-co se - den - do si posa. S'io pian-go e lui la fa-cia ha la-chry-mo - sa E dol-si del mio af -fa - no e del mio ma - le E dol-si del mio af- fan - no e del mio ma - le.

S'io sedo a l'ombra amor giú pone el strale
E l'arco, e meco sedendo si posa.
S'io piango, e lui la facia (ha) lachrymosa,
E dolsi del mio affanno e del mio male.

S'io mi lamento dil colpo mortale,
Lui me conforta con voce amorosa.
S'io mostro la ferita sanguinosa,
E lui l'asciuga con le sue bianche ale.

S'io vade in boschi, e lui per boschi viene.
S'io solco il mar, e lui volge le sarte
E'l timor dritto contro il vento tiene

S'io vado in guerra, e lui diventa marte.
E perché siano eterne le mie pene,
Questo tiran da me mai non si parte.

I sit in the shadows, love comes down beside me
And sitting, lays down his bow.
I weep, and he is melancholy,
Feeling the sweetness of my breathlessness and pain.

I groan from a mortal blow,
He comforts me with his loving voice.
I show him a bloody wound,
And he dries it with his white wings.

I hide in the woods, and he comes through the woods
I sail across the sea, and he bends
The wind against my starboard side to hold me.

I march into war, and he becomes like mars.
And because I eternally suffer,
This tyrant will never leave me.

The voice alone begins the song in a declamatory style, with the lute coming in to support the cadence. The second textual and musical phrase echoes the first with only slight melodic and harmonic variation at the cadence. In the second half of the piece, the lute and voice move together homophonically and primarily in thirds along a chant-like melody which awakens to melodic impetuosity only in the final musical phrase, a literal repeat of the fourth line of poetic text, and an embellished repeat of the fourth line of music.

The whole sonnet, consisting of fourteen iambic hendecasyllable lines grouped as two quatrains and two tercets, with the most common rhyme scheme being ABBA

ABBA CDC DCD, fits rather awkwardly to Cara's melody which contains only enough music for five lines of poetry, a feature which Don Harrán calls "plainly unorthodox" (Harrán 2001, 870). The sonnet was rarely set as a through-composed song, rather, many *frottola* composers resorted to repetition to solve the problems involved in setting the lengthy sonnet: a typical formula uses three musical phrases, the middle one of which is repeated to accommodate the third line of the quatrains, as in Cara's *Mentre che a tua belta*, an anonymous setting of *Benche inimica e tediosa sei*, or the untexted *Modo de Cantar Sonetti*, numbers 23, 19 and 21 respectively in Petrucci's *Strambotti, Ode, Frottole, Sonetti. Et modo de cantar versi latini e capituli. Libro Quarto* (1505). The performer would sing the music through four times, twice with repeats for the two quatrains, and twice without for the tercets of the sonnet (*abbc abbc abc abc*). Another common method of setting the sonnet involved composing separate music for the quatrain and the tercet, so that the performer simply repeated each section twice (*abcd abcd efg efg*, or simply AABB).

Cara solves the problem of uneven stanzas differently in *Se per chieder mercé gratia s'impetra* (in Petrucci, Libro VIII and Bossinensis Book I), where he uses the first method of sonnet setting, repeating the second musical phrase for the third line of the quatrains, but adds a fourth musical line which uses the final line of the poem, "Felice è ben chi da tal guerra scampa" as a refrain for each stanza.[23] The repetition in *Se per chieder mercé gratia s'impetra* gives the performer a suggestion for singing *S'io sedo a l'ombra amor*. The singer could simply omit the second phrase of music (which is a partial repetition of the first) when singing the tercets —repeating the last line of each stanza as per the first quatrain— thus conflating Cara's more elaborate form into the simple three-phrase formula typical of the *frottola*-sonnet. Or, taking a cue from Cara's later sonnet setting, the singer could re-use the last line of the first quatrain as a refrain for each verse, using it for both the fourth and fifth musical phrases while singing the tercets.[24] Repeating this exquisite description of the sweet pain of love —"E dolsi del mio affano e del mio male" ("the sweetness of my breathlessness and my pain")— would not be out of place in a performance situation dedicated to the chivalric expression of courtly love, such as Isabella's singing for the French Ambassador during the wedding festivities for her brother Alfonso and Lucrezia Borgia.

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[23] William Prizer notes that Disertori misrepresents the form of this work in his transcription of the Bossinensis lute books. The intended form is clearer in Petrucci's *Eighth Book of Frottolas*, 1597 (Prizer 1980, 112).

Although Isabella d'Este's appearance at one of the Ferrarese wedding banquets of 1502 is often alluded to, the peculiar circumstances surrounding this rare musical display are usually glossed over. Isabella herself downplays the incident in a letter to her husband Francesco, saying, "after dinner we performed the hat dance. When this was completed, it was necessary for me to make my appearance in singing with the lute because so many requests were made to me" (Isabella d'Este, letter of 7 February 1502; in Fenlon 1980, 169). The dancing which "display[ed] her choreographic ability in a way apparently acceptable to fifteenth-century sensibilities" was a more common entertainment practised by noblewomen (Brown 1987, 67). Numerous instances of high-ranking ladies dancing for a large gathering are recorded, as, for instance, when Isabella d'Este and Anna Sforza "danced country dances together amidst the applause of the assembled company" in Pavia for Alfonso's first wedding (Cartwright 1903, 57), or when Isabella d'Aragona, Duchess of Milan, performed two Neapolitan dances with three of her ladies-in-waiting at the splendid *Festa del Paradiso* held by Ludovico in her honour in 1490. Singing, however, especially to self-accompaniment, seems to be a less frequently disported accomplishment. Hence Isabella d'Este's performance in Ferrara was a rare treat for the assembled crowd; it also functioned in harmony with her political agenda.

Isabella's performance on this occasion was not mere spontaneous condescension to an admiring crowd, which her letter to Francesco implies. Rather it was part of a carefully thought-out plan to cultivate a political ally. On Saturday February 5, the third day of the combined carnival and wedding festivities, Lucrezia stayed in her apartment to wash her hair and write letters. Isabella immediately seized the opportunity afforded by the canceled evening entertainment to hold dinner in her own rooms, strategically inviting the French ambassador Philippe de la Roche Martin to attend. At a time when the power of King Louis XII of France was increasing in Italy and Isabella's friendship with the king's fiercest enemy Ludovico Gonzaga was well known, Isabella was in need of friends at the French court. Attired in a costly dress of silver and white, she hosted the ambassador at a cultivated, private dinner party, seating him between herself and the Duchess of Urbino.[25] After dinner and entertainment provided by singer-lutenist Marchetto Cara, Isabella provided the culminating token of her special favour: "in a slight but pleasing voice" she sang for the French Ambassador to lute accompaniment, "letting the song die out as if overcome with emotion, her eyes shining" (Bellonci 1953, 188). Isabella ended the evening on an even more personal note, escorting de la Roche Martin into her private room and presenting him with the gloves which she had worn throughout the evening—a chivalric gesture of love and favour from a Lady to her Knight. Isabella's overtures must have been a success, for the ambassador was reputedly won over, accepting the gloves "with reverence and love" and promising "to keep them in 'a consecrated place, *usque ad consummationem saeculi*'" (in Bellonci 1953, 188).[26] Isabella's performance on this occasion was certainly more than mere entertainment. The display of her musical skill on the lute and her beautiful singing was presented as an extension of her identity as the most cultivated and refined woman of her age, and calculated to gain an important political ally.

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[24] Prizer suggests omitting the first musical phrase to accommodate the tercets (Prizer 1980, 113).

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[25] Also in attendance Isabella mentions Ferrante and Giulio d'Este, Hercolano da Cosenza and his wife Laura, along with several of her married ladies.

[26] In the ensuing war, Isabella proved herself capable of maintaining complete control over complex political relations, negotiating with both French and Papal forces without compromising Mantua's position, and espousing a secret alliance with her brother and the Ferrarese-French army, while within Mantua supporting the Pontifical and Venetian army of which her husband was Captain-General and her son a political hostage. At every turn she acted in the best interests of Mantua and her own self, often utilising perceived 'feminine' qualities to her advantage: she indulged in a surface image of innocent complicity and female weakness, often pretending a military decision was the result of yielding to unwelcome force, and manipulating the men on both sides who remained secretly devoted to this famous Marchesa. As a result, Mantua remained relatively unscathed.

Isabella proved that for this formidable stateswoman, even music functioned in support of her political ambitions.

Like Isabella d'Este, Lucrezia Borgia learned at a very young age the political value of her position as a member of a powerful family, and cultivated her reputation as a beautiful and accomplished woman of the Renaissance. From the time of her first engagement at age 11, Lucrezia, favourite daughter of Pope Alexander VI, began to receive political visitors at her home in the Palazzo Santa Maria in Portico, next door to the Papal residence, where she lived with her cousin Adriana Mila and Giulia Farnese, Mila's daughter-in-law and mistress to the Pope. Ambassadors, courtiers, artists and poets paid court to the young Borgia princess, hoping to gain her father's favour or stay her brother Cesare's wrath. It is known that Lucrezia had "whole chests full of appeals and memoranda" from those seeking her intercession: as one chronicler wrote, "the greater number who seek advantage in that quarter [from the Pope] pass through [her] door" (in Bellonci 1953, 47). After two failed marriages, Lucrezia became the second wife of Alfonso d'Este, heir to the Duchy of Ferrara.[27] A noblewoman's marriage was decided by her father and brothers for reasons of political alliance, but, as Isabella d'Este ably proved, this did stop her from making her own political connections. Yet Lucrezia seemed less eager to involve herself in the political intrigues of family and state than her sister-in-law (although she did support her brother Cesare's campaigns with what little funds she could raise, and sought his release from a Spanish prison toward the end of his career). Instead, upon arriving at Ferrara in 1502, she gathered around her a court of brilliant intellectuals, noble cavaliers and sophisticated women, not to make alliances, but to bury herself in pleasurable distractions.

During the anxious days which settled upon her early in her marriage (caused by the antagonism of the Estensi, Gonzaga and Sforza families, particularly her father-in-law Duke Ercole, and sister-in-law Isabella), Lucrezia was drawn to poetry and music and she quickly formed lasting friendships with the new Petrarchan poets Pietro Bembo and Ercole Strozzi. Bembo dedicated his *Asolani* —considerations on, and poems about, love— to Lucrezia, and the two carried on an ardent but platonic love affair from 1502-1505. Strozzi and Lucrezia formed a deep bond almost from their first meeting, one which may have cost the poet his life, as he was assassinated while acting as go-between for Lucrezia and Francesco Gonzaga during a future love affair.[28] Other poets, including Bernardo Accolti (called *el Unico Aretino*), Ludovico Ariosto and Antonio Tebaldeo, graced her court, as well as artists such as Michele Costa, who decorated her rooms in the *castello* in Ferrara and was a member of her household from 1505-1507. Musicians whom Lucrezia brought with her from Rome, including composer and performer Niccolò da Padova, were soon augmented with Dionisio da Mantova called 'Papino,' and Bartolomeo Tromboncino, who transferred his allegiance from Isabella to Lucrezia sometime after 1502. Included among her ladies and courtiers were amateur musicians Madonna Dalida de Putti and Graziosa Pio, and dancers Caterina of Valencia, Nicola of Siena and the Slavic Dimitria. Her ladies of honour, particularly Angela Borgia and Nicola Trotti, were instrumental in attracting pleasure-seeking courtiers to Lucrezia's court, and from their arrival Don Giulio and Don Ferrante d'Este were among Lucrezia's most frequent and chivalrous attendants, until Duke Ercole forbade them to visit the young Duchess and her ladies more than twice a week.

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[27] Her first marriage to Giovanni Sforza, Count of Pesaro was annulled in 1497 on grounds of non-consummation; her second husband, Alfonso d'Aragona, Duke of Bisceglie, was killed by Cesare Borgia's swordsmen; contrary to popular rumour, none of Lucrezia's three husbands were, in fact, poisoned.

Within this lively court circle, music certainly functioned as a pleasant courtly diversion, just as Castiglione declares it should, whether performed by aristocratic amateurs like Dalida da Putti and Graziosa Pio, or by Papino, Paolo Poccino or Ricciardetto Tamborino, the professional musicians of the Duchess's household. A picture of country music-making is described by Lucrezia Borgia's biographer Maria Bellonci, as she paints a typical day spent relaxing at the lovely Este summer palace of Belriguardo:

> Lucrezia's real pleasure at Belriguardo must have been the great park with its airy splendour artfully ordered by gardeners, painters and architects. . . .

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[28] Lucrezia Borgia's and Pietro Bembo's love letters are translated and published in Shankland 1987. The complete poetic works of Ercole Strozzi were dedicated to Lucrezia in 1513 by Aldo Manuzio.

> [there] ladies and gentlemen dressed in satin and velvet would gather in the shade of a fine beech tree, while at their feet would run a little stream as like as possible to the 'clear, fresh and sweet waters' of Petrarch's verse. They would read Bembo's *Asolani* and discuss the problems and examples of Platonic love. One of the gentlewomen would take up the lute and sing softly—perhaps Lucrezia's intimate friend Graziosa Pio, a famous Milanese beauty of the House of Maggi. The painted towers of Belriguardo nearby would attract their gaze and suggest thoughts of the court, and the conversation would change to plans for balls and *fêtes champêtres*. Lucrezia would be in a good humour, she would want to please her favourites and see everyone around her happy. She would give jewels to Graziosa Pio, and for her daughter Beatrice she would give dances and supper-parties to celebrate her betrothal. The three hundred rooms of Belriguardo would all be full to overflowing . . . [with] music and dancing. (Bellonci 1953, 190)

Such a picture is reminiscent of the scenes set outside the *Decameron*'s beautiful palace in the Florentine countryside, or at *Il Cortegiano*'s Urbino, where daytime hours were occupied with "honorable and pleasant exercises both of the body and of the mind" and evenings spent in "gentle discussions and innocent pleasantries were heard . . . amidst the pleasant pastimes [of] music and dancing" (Castiglione 1959, 16-17). Music in these settings functioned as a simple recreational tool, and the lady and courtier performed in private moments according to what Castiglione considered the proper time for music: "whenever one finds himself in a familiar and cherished company where there are no pressing concerns" (Castiglione 1959, 105). Lucrezia's other main source of recreational music is found in the theatrical *intermedi* which she greatly enjoyed, this time not as performer, but as an appreciative patron. Many references to the lavish balls and *feste* which Lucrezia was particularly fond of hosting and attending include varied performances of instrumental, vocal, sacred and secular music.[29]

But for this Borgia princess, music patronage and performance had an added dimension. Her personal musical tastes presented an avenue of expressing her heritage in a court where she felt cut off from family and the familiar Spanish customs of her Roman home. Although Lucrezia was born and raised in Rome, her Borgia heritage was decidedly Spanish, strengthened by the family's continued use of the Aragonese dialect and close ties to the ruling Aragona family in Naples. As Maria Bellonci comments, we are decidedly "short of documentary evidence about the musicians who, during her residence in Rome, helped to form Lucrezia's musical culture and awoke the passion for music which she inherited from Alexander VI and later manifested at Ferrara" (Bellonci 128). Undoubtedly, Lucrezia would have heard the compositions of Josquin des Pres, who remained in the Pope's service until 1494, but it was the Spanish-style secular music favoured by the Borgia family which most influenced her musical tastes.

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[29] To cite just two examples, a banquet give for Lucrezia by Antonio de' Costabili lists bagpipe processionals, psalms sung "in voce bassa," and the music of lutes, viols and cornetts; on another occasion Lucrezia hired Nicola Piva and his companions to perform for a *festa* during the 1506 carnival season (in Prizer 1985, 3 & 13).

Upon her arrival in Ferrara in 1502 as the bride of Alfonso, Lucrezia had brought several Spanish singers and *viole* players who performed at her wedding festivities. A letter from Isabella to Francesco of 2 February 1502 describes four singers who, during an *intermedio* to the comedy *Casina*, "sang certain songs in Spanish because they were two women and two men who are with Donna Lucrezia; they sang very well" (in Prizer 1985, 23). Alfonso's recent interest in the new viol and his performance in a viol consort on the final evening of the week-long nuptial celebrations was yet another tribute to his Borgia bride's musical heritage. This was not the first instance of Spanish-style music in the northern courts, however. In 1493 Spanish players of the *viole* (which Ian Woodfield identifies as viols *da gamba* rather than the Spanish-style *viheula*) sent from Rome by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza performed for Ludovico and Beatrice, the Duke and Duchess of Bari, at their palace in Vigevano. Beatrice was quite fond of the Spanish style of singing; her favourite tenor, Giovanni Angelo Testagrossa, reportedly sang in the Spanish style, and the Spaniard Pedro Maria, who was director of the palace concerts at Milan, is frequently mentioned in Bellincioni's poems. Lucrezia, however, embraced Spanish-style music and musicians not as an exotic novelty, but as a part of her own cultural identity.

Soon after Lucrezia's arrival in Ferrara as Prince Alfonso's bride, the majority of her Spanish attendants and some of her ladies-in-waiting, including her cousin Hieronima Borgia, and "le due che cantavo, et cussi la magiore parte de questi Spagnoli de la famiglia"—"the two women who sang, and thus the majority of the Spaniards in her household," (letter of de' Prosperi 26 February 1502; in Prizer 1985, 23)— were forced to depart for Rome on Duke Ercole's orders. In addition, the Duke refused to allot her the 12,000 ducat income to which Lucrezia felt she was entitled, based on the amount of her dowry.[30] Cut off from home and antagonized by her father-in-law, Lucrezia's retention of Spanish customs (such as requiring her ladies-in-waiting to dress in black on Fridays) and Spanish music allowed her a form of self expression which helped maintain her independence from the northern dynasty to which she was wed. Even after relations with her Este in-laws improved somewhat, Lucrezia continued to patronize Spanish music and musicians. For instance, she employed a Spanish singer for the 1506 Christmas festivities (payrolls for that year indicate she spent twenty-five *lire*, four *denari* on the Spanish improviser; in Prizer 1985, 23). Her unique identity with the Borgia Spanish heritage even influenced music composition. Three Spanish-texted frottole by Tromboncino, *Muchos son che van perdidos*, *Monchos son d'amor* and *Quando la speranza es perdida* along with his setting of an Italian translation of a well known Spanish composition, *Nunca fué pena mayor*, were written for Lucrezia sometime after the lutenist-composer joined the Borgia princess's court in 1502, although they were not published until 1517, 1519 and 1505 respectively.[31]

Iain Fenlon remarks that "music has social functions, and changes in social structures and needs bring about changes in the functions of music itself' (Fenlon 1980, 1). Within similar social structures, the diverse needs of the leading ladies of the northern Italian courts in the early *cinquecento* caused subtle changes in the function of music, which reflected the development of their individual identities. Proving that music can function as more than frivolous entertainment, Elisabetta Gonzaga, Beatrice d'Este, Lucrezia Borgia and Isabella d'Este employed musicians, patronized poets and composers, and engaged in musical education and performance for reasons of spiritual inspiration, personal accomplishment, family connections, ethnic expression, public prestige and political negotiation. Each specific performance opportunity was motivated by different reasons, but contributed to the diffusion of musical taste and the development of musical form and style, which in turn encouraged the formation of the noblewoman's identity as a maker of style and mistress of culture.

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[30] Duke Ercole immediately balked at Lucrezia's request which constituted a sizeable increase from the 2710 ducat income that he paid his wife, the Duchess Eleanora. Ercole first tried to convince Lucrezia to agree to only 8,000 ducats and was met with outrage from both Lucrezia and her father Pope Alexander VI who had paid a staggering 300,000 ducats in cash, land and favours as his daughter's dowry. After much haggling (and a very interesting letter from Isabella detailing her remarkable management of a 6,000 ducat budget which through investment she managed to increase to 10,500 ducats), Duke Ercole finally resigned himself to give Lucrezia the full twelve thousand, but in a circuitous way—6,000 ducats were paid to Lucrezia in cash and 6,000 managed by the Duke who paid the living expenses of her servants (many of whom complained about the Duke's miserly wages!). Lucrezia's household of 66 was considerably smaller than Isabella's court of about 150, and smaller than the 120 her father had wanted her to have. For the remainder of his life, Duke Ercole preferred to control his daughter-in-law's finances as much as possible, in spite of Lucrezia's proven ability in administrative and financial fields.

[31] For further discussion of these four songs, see Prizer 1985, 23, fn. 92.

Chapter Three

Mia Patrona e Signora — Patronage at the Courts of the Northern Duchesses

In his series of essays entitled, *Italy: 1530-1630*, Eric Cochrane argues that with very few exceptions "none of them [the Italian princes] had anything resembling what Italians of the age defined as a 'court'—that is, the one they read about in Castiglione" (Cochrane 1988, 60). Whether Cochrane is implying that Castiglione's description, published in 1528, is more fiction than fact, or that the style of court exemplified at Urbino had died out by the 1530s-60s (the period of Cochrane's study), the early *cinquecento* did witness several brilliant examples of court culture which remained a lasting influence throughout the century. However fictionalized Castiglione's dialogue may be, the residence of notable men and women of rank, learning, and artistic ability, and their intellectual interaction at the courts of the northern duchesses, was very real. The northern duchesses presided over these courts, assuming roles as mistresses of court and culture; their patronage of artists, musicians, specific compositions and musical genres contributed greatly to the artistic and musical climate in northern Italy at the turn of the century, and profoundly influenced the stylistic development of secular vocal music.

Female Patronage and the Making of Court Culture

The exemplary court that Castiglione describes in *Il libro di cortegiano* is notably presided over by a woman. The Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga of Urbino, along with her close friend and appointed deputy Signora Emilia Pia, the widowed Marchesa of Cotrone, oversee the conversations which take place in the Duchess's rooms, specifically the *sala delle veglie* in the Ducal palace.[1] This arrangement not only imitates the literary convention of the Medieval courts of love presided over by Marie de Champagne and Blanche of Castile, but reflects the real fact of the Renaissance lady's importance in the creation of a thriving artistic court. Freed from the duties of military campaigns and ducal government which occupied their husbands, the duchesses of the northern courts had ample time and energy to devote to the patronage of music, art and literature. As Iain Fenlon remarks, noblewomen such as the duchesses of Ferrara and Milan and the marchionesses of Mantua "took pride in [their] image as 'una decima Musa'" and "took [their] role as patron of poetry, music and art with great seriousness" (Fenlon 1980, 30). The role which female patrons occupied in the formation of their courts made a significant contribution to the artistic and musical climate of northern Italy in the early sixteenth century.

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[1] Castiglione cites as explanation that the older Duke Guidobaldo de Montefeltro is incapacitated by gout and hence retires early after supper, leaving the evenings of witty conversation, music and dancing to his wife, her ladies and certain male members of her court, including Duke Giuliano de' Medici, poet and cardinal Pietro Bembo, Signora Emilia Pia, Count Ludovico de Canossa, Countess Costanza Fregoso, Gaspar Pallavicino, Cesare Gonzaga and many

Descriptions of philosophical debate, sparkling conversation, poetic offering, artistic creation, and musical inspiration at the courts of these great ladies are found in the records of court chroniclers, letters from ambassadors, ladies-in-waiting or resident corespondents, musical and poetic dedications, and of course larger literary works like Castiglione's *Cortegiano.* In one such literary work, namely the biography of Serafino Aquilano, Beatrice's poet and secretary Vincenzo Calmeta celebrates the literary and musical circle found at the Duchess of Milan's renowned court:[2]

> Her court was composed of men of talent and distinction, most of whom were poets and musicians, who were expected to compose new eclogues, comedies, or tragedies, and arrange new spectacles and representations every month. In her leisure hours she generally employed a certain Antonio Grifo or some equally gifted man, to read the Divina Commedia, or the works of other Italian poets, aloud to her. . . And among the illustrious

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other notable historical figures.

[2] Celebrated Italian poet and musician Serafino Aquilano (Serafino de' Ciminelli dall'Aquila, 1466-1500), first came to Milan while in the service of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza in 1489. He prospered in Beatrice's service from 1495 to 1497. Cartwright describes Serafino as hunchbacked and of dwarfed stature, but notes that he "sang his own *strambotti* and eclogues so well, and had so fascinating a way of accompanying himself on the lute that the Este and Gonzaga ladies all entreated him for new verses, and literally wrangled over the man himself" (Cartwright 1928, 143).

> men whose presence adorned the court of the duchess there were three high-born cavaliers, renowned for many talents, but above all for their poetic gifts—Niccolo da Correggio, Gaspare Visconti, and Antonio di Campa Fregoso, together with many others, one of whom was myself, Vincenzo Calmeta, who for some years held the post of secretary to that glorious and excellent lady. And besides those I have named there was Benedetto da Cingoli, called Piceno, and many other youths of no small promise, who offered her the firstfruits of their genius. Nor was Duchess Beatrice content with rewarding and honouring the poets of her own court. On the contrary, she sent to all parts of Italy to inquire for the compositions of elegant poets, and placed their books as sacred and divine things on the shelves of her cabinet of study, and praised and rewarded each writer according to his merit. In this manner, poetry and literature in the vulgar tongue, which had degenerated and sunk into forgetfulness after the days of Petrarch and Boccaccio, has been restored to its former dignity, first by the protection of Lorenzo de' Medici, and then by the influence of this rare lady, and others like her, who are still living at the present time. (In Cartwright 1928, 142-43)

In addition to these literary men, portrait painters Ambrogio de Predis and Andrea Solari, skilled mathematicians Luca Pacioli and Bramante of Urbino, and brilliant soldiers and courtiers such as Galeazzo and Robert San Severino all attended Beatrice's court. Calmeta also confesses that music "flourished in an especial manner at the Milanese court" and tells of Leonardo da Vinci and Cristoforo Romano who "laid down the sculptor's chisel to play the lyre or viol for her pleasure" (in Cartwright 1928, 151 and 76). Indeed, many courtiers who are now known principally as artists, poets or musicians undertook very different and diverse tasks as part of their court function. Niccolò da Corregio, for instance, renowned in his own time for heroic military service but remembered today as a poet and playwright, wrote sonnets and *canzoni* for his cousin Beatrice to sing, translated Breton legends and Provençal romances, set Virgil and Petrarch to music, and even designed new patterns for her gowns and escorted her and her ladies on their various travels. Even the great artists Leonardo da Vinci and Titian, both of whom were employed at the court of Milan by Duke Ludovico for long periods of time, were often present at Beatrice's court. In addition to painting portraits and decorating her chambers with frescoes, they designed banquet decorations and sets and costumes for the numerous dramatic presentations and *feste* which Beatrice hosted.

A young Baldassare Castiglione, who came to Milan for his education in the late 1490s, described the society he found there as "the flower of the human race" (in Ady 1907, 297) and regretted in his *Cortegiano* "that all of you did not know . . . the Duchess Beatrice of Milan, in order that you might never again have occasion to marvel at a woman's abilities" (Castiglione 1959, 239). Calmeta makes it clear that Beatrice, rather than her husband or other Milanese courtiers, was the primary stimulus for the creation of such a gathering of cultural brilliance, and concludes his description of the duchess' court by lamenting, "and when Duchess Beatrice died everything fell into ruin. That court, which had been a joyous Paradise, became a dark and gloomy Inferno, and poets and artists were forced to seek another road" (in Cartwright 1928, 143). After Beatrice's death in 1497, many poets and musicians left Milan, several of them transferring their service to the Marchesa of Mantua. Those who stayed were forced to seek positions elsewhere only a few years later when the French king invaded Milan and the Sforza ruler and his heirs fled into exile.

The brilliant court culture that Beatrice presided over as both guardian and inspiration was duplicated at Mantua, Urbino and Ferrara by Isabella d'Este, Elisabetta Gonzaga and Lucrezia Borgia. The more retiring duchess of Urbino, Elisabetta Gonzaga, held a distinguished court which became the archetypal backdrop for Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano*. Isabella d'Este, never to be outdone by her sister, had an equally brilliant set of courtiers and artists in residence at Mantua (especially after the dissolution of the Sforza court in Milan). Artists Lorenzo Costa, Lorenzo Leombruno, Giulio Romano, Andrea Mantegna, Gian Cristoforo Romano, Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael were all at some time in her personal employ at Mantua, and among the poets whom she sponsored were Serafino Aquilano, Vincenzo Calmeta, Galeotto del Carretto, Pietro Bembo, Castiglione, and Ariosto. In addition to those who resided at Mantua, Isabella "corresponded with virtually every important figure in the arts, and," as William Prizer puts it, "under her enlightened guidance Mantuan art and letters flourished" (Prizer 1980, 2). Her favourite courtiers included Jacopo d'Atri, Count of Pianella and Niccolò da Corregio. Although the latter was rarely present at Mantua (he resided predominantly in

Milan and then in Ferrara) he acknowledged the Marchesa's far-reaching influence, addressing Isabella in his copious letters as "la mia patrona e signora," and "la mia Illustrissima Isabella"; during a discussion of illustrious women at Ludovico *Il Moro*'s palace of Vigevano, Corregio distinguished the Marchesa of Mantua with the much coveted title of "la prima donna del mondo" (in Cartwright 1903, 83).

Lucrezia Borgia, the fourth woman of note in the northern duchies, established a healthy cultural circle as duchess of Ferrara soon after her marriage. Isabella and Lucrezia were fierce rivals from Lucrezia's first arrival in Ferrara, especially as Isabella thoroughly disliked having her place as "first lady of the Renaissance" challenged by a young Roman with an equal reputation for beauty and wit which overshadowed her rather unsavoury past.[3] During Lucrezia and Alfonso's wedding celebrations, Isabella went to great lengths to outshine the bride in costly dress and jewelery, laughed at her courtiers' Spanish customs, commented at length about Lucrezia's aloofness and unfriendly attitude, and made a great show of virtue during an indecent play by Plautus about pimps and whores. Isabella was no doubt disgruntled to find so many of her favourite courtiers, poets and musicians leave Mantua to pay court to the new duchess at Ferrara, while Lucrezia counted it a triumph to have Antonio Tebaldeo, Niccolò da Corregio and Bartolomeo Tromboncino, all formerly devoted to Isabella, in attendance at her court.

Ronald Asch sees the early modern court as a place which "emerged from the households of medieval kings and princes" with an emphasis on "conspicuous consumption and . . . dignified leisure" (Asch 1991, 4). With the urbanization of many administrative and political functions, Asch argues, the court "became all the more important as a cultural centre" (Asch 1991, 6). Within this social milieu, the northern duchesses were exemplary models of the re-surfacing Medieval ideal which recognized the courtly lady as mistress and muse of cultural and artistic activities. The degree of control a woman in such a position could exercise over the cultural production of her court was immense —she expressed tastes and styles which were immediately echoed and emulated, she encouraged or rebuffed artists, scholars and musicians, making a courtier's career at court or dismissing him with equal ease. The most astute of these leading ladies took this opportunity to forge a personal identity as an individual whose purpose was not only to aggrandize themselves through a reputation of cultural brilliance, but also to encourage art and learning. The many poetic encomiums praising the intellectual brilliance of Isabella d'Este, Elisabetta Gonzaga, Lucrezia Borgia and Beatrice d'Este, both during their lives and upon their deaths, attest not only to the effectiveness of their efforts to be ranked among the most intelligent and cultured women of the age, but to the thriving culture they instigated within the northern courts as patrons of literature, art and music.

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[3] Gianluca Castellini, Duke Ercole's private counsellor who had gone to Rome for the marriage negotiations, reported that Lucrezia possessed an "undeniable beauty, which is enhanced by her manner, and, in short, appeared so gentle that one cannot, nay should not suspect her of any sinister deeds" (in Cloulas 1989, 202).

In the sixteenth century, patronage was the most important factor in a young artist's artistic, literary or musical career, and the activities of female patrons were particularly noteworthy at the beginning of the century. Lisa Jardine comments, "the issue of female patrons is an interesting one, and ripe for investigation. Where women were accidentally in control of *wealth* (through quirks in inheritance law), there appears to have been considerable social encouragement for their directing that wealth towards culture" (Jardine 1999, 74 fn.33). A financial surplus to spend on cultural elements —books, musical compositions, portraits, decorating and remodeling, a commemorative altarpiece or poetic dedication— was a prerequisite for a woman becoming a patron. Such wealth might be acquired by aristocratic or bourgeois women through gifts, inheritance or regular income, or it might form a part of the budgeted income paid to a woman by her husband or father-in-law according to her dowry and the terms of her marriage; it could also, as Isabella d'Este proved, be augmented through careful investment and financial management.

A surplus of money allowed any woman to practice the most basic aspect of artistic patronage, namely the commissioning of a single work: a poem, book of poetry, musical composition or, most commonly, a painting. Catherine King notes that the commissioning of a funerary altarpiece was a particularly popular style of "matronage" practised by wealthy middle-class widows: it was “a form nicely calculated to give them some personal commemoration in the public location of a church but one which at the same time was properly pious and usually intended to benefit their family or community—and therefore fittingly ‘feminine’” (King 1992, 372-73). Wealthier aristocratic women like Lucrezia Borgia and Isabella d’Este could obviously afford more than a single commemorative art object in their lifetime, and their patronage ranged from founding and endowing convents to commissioning public statues to the decoration of private palaces. Noblewomen often had small collections of various paintings and objects which decorated their personal chambers; as Duchess Isabella d’Aragona of Milan, wife of Gian Galeazzo Sforza described it, they might even designate a specific “room where we keep several devote things, objects that we frequently wish to examine” (in Brown 1997, 65).

Not surprisingly, Isabella d’Este was one of the foremost collectors of art of her time. Her dazzling array of precious antiquities, contemporary art, musical instruments, and some 230 books rivalled or indeed surpassed that of the most avid collectors in Italy. As she herself remarked, she had an “insatiable desire for antiquities” (“insatiable desiderio nostro de cose antique”) and spent a huge portion of her time and resources in building up a substantial art collection (in Brown 1997, 55). The *Studiolo* and *Grotta* of her Appartamento della Grotta of the Ducal Palace in the Corte Vecchia, Mantua, were Isabella’s treasure rooms, which she had specially remodelled to house her impressive collection and decorated with a series of paintings by the leading practitioners of the time. “As late as 1626” notes Clifford Brown, “travelogues of Italy specifically singled out her art treasures, while overlooking the other museum rooms scattered about the vast and sprawling Ducal Palace” (Brown 1997, 64-65).

Isabella’s pursuit of art and antiquities was so consuming that she did not flinch from using a friend’s downfall to her personal advantage. Although professing close friendship with Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, Isabella had enough presence of mind when Urbino was sacked by Cesare Borgia to remember the classic *Venus* from a Roman excavation and the famous *Sleeping Cupid* by Michelangelo (about which she exclaimed "among new things it has no peer"; in Bellonci 1953, 201-202) which had both been in the palace at Urbino. She immediately wrote to her brother Cardinal Ippolito in Rome to appeal to Cesare for these pieces of sculpture; Cesare replied by sending the statues to Isabella with one of his chamberlains, and they remained in her grotto in Mantua, even after Urbino was restored to the Montefeltros. Isabella also agreed to the theft of a *Hercules* relief from the rubble of the Bentivoglio palace in Bologna, and ordered a deathwatch at the bed of the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli, so that she might immediately become the owner of his "puttino di marmo qual à facto per morto" (in Brown 1997, 70). She spent considerable time and effort tracking down a clavichord by Lorenzo da Pavia previously owned by her sister Beatrice; the instrument had been removed after the invasion of Milan by Cesare Borgia and his French army. She also regularly ousted her siblings and even her father when art or music was involved. In a letter of November 13, 1497, to an agent in Venice whom Isabella employed to obtain antiquities from the shop of a recently deceased jeweler, Domenico di Piero, she writes, "we have no doubt but that upon reaching Venice our Illustrious father who adores antiquities, will attempt to acquire the best of the di Piero collection; it is in our interest that you do everything possible to ensure that they have been crated and shipped to Mantua before His Excellency's arrival" (in Brown 1997, 64).

The patronage of music functioned rather differently, for it was neither as consuming nor as wide-spread as the collection of art. Although Isabella and her sister Beatrice did in fact collect musical instruments, as much for their aesthetic beauty as for their use, and the possession of a deluxe anthology of melodies or song texts would hold a prized place in their libraries, music was seen less as an object to be collected and cherished, and more as a commodity to be consumed and enjoyed. The absence of antique instruments or music books excluded music from becoming part of Isabella's passion for antiquities. The northern duchesses still practised a per item patronage in the commissioning of single works of music or instruments, or in the casual employment of itinerant musicians. Lucrezia, for instance, often hired musicians on a single contract basis, such as her employment of Nicola Piva and his companions to perform for a *festa* during the 1506 carnival season.[4] Isabella and Beatrice commissioned many instruments from their favourite instrument maker, Lorenzo da Pavia, sometimes specifically detailing the design or materials to be used.[5] In the case of composers, a single piece of music might be commissioned for a certain occasion, or a musical setting purchased for a special poem, but typically Isabella and Lucrezia would turn to their own salaried household composer, or on occasion to their husband's court or chapel composer for new music.

Beyond the simple hiring of a musician or purchase of a song or instrument for a special occasion, the relationship between musicians and their patrons was a complex one. The idea of patronage in the Renaissance, although altered by humanist ideals and economic growth, retained much of its feudal characteristics, especially as practised in the northern courts. Antoni Maczak prefers the term "clientage" in describing the early modern patron-client (or patron-broker-client) relationship: "clientage," he writes is "a somewhat softened and usually less ceremonial form of vassalage" corresponding to the early modern idea of society as "a structure based on hierarchy, kinship and corporation" now also informed by a money economy (Maczak 1991, 316-317). Members of the duchesses' courts and households pursued a client-patron relationship as a viable means by which to provide financially and materially for themselves and their families; they could also gain important social value through their relationship with the ruling family. Music was a valuable gift in the establishment of such a relationship.

A noblewoman would commonly establish her own household, with servants and courtiers often on a separate payroll system from that of her husband. Yet the household and the court were separate though overlapping entities. As Asch explains, "the real criterion for membership of the court was access to the ruler. Those who had such access, however . . . did not necessarily belong to the household, whereas many household members of lower station were excluded from the privilege of access to the ruler" (Asch 1991, 8). The households of the northern duchesses included salaried chamber musicians —singers, string players, keyboardists, and pipe and tabour players; however, the best musicians held an interesting position within the court structure, for they were employed members of the duchess's household, yet because of their often privileged access to the duchess or duke as well as their revered status as artists, they met the expected criterion for membership in the court.[6] Often the most prized musicians of a duchess's household succeeded in cultivating a more intimate relationship with their patron, above that of a valued employee, and even attained the status of *famiglia*, so that the demarcation between courtier and professional musician could easily be clouded. While the court served as a place where noble and entertainer alike could acquire influence, prestige and wealth, both courtier and artist were subject to the whim of the ruler and the sometimes ambivalent relationship of the monarch to his or her court.

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[4] Although the duchesses rarely commanded the resources to spend as much as their male counterparts might. For instance, the Duke of Ferrara hired eighty trumpeters and twenty-four bagpipe players and drummers to herald the marriage festivities of Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso d'Este.

[5] See Brown 1982 and Prizer 1982 for the correspondence between Isabella d'Este and Lorenzo da Pavia.

Ladies, courtiers and musicians all needed to work hard to bring themselves to the attention of a prospective patron, and musical excellence was one talent that could help such an effort. Regionamento Guasco was quick to advise his daughter Lavinia that her musical skill could gain the praise of the court and further her career as a lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Savoy; while Graziosa Pia, one of Lucrezia Borgia's favourite ladies-in-waiting, was highly praised for her singing and lute playing. A young Pietro Bembo wrote to Isabella d'Este in 1505, seeking her patronage of his poetry —"I would really like to have my verses sung by your Highness, remembering as I do the sweetness and elegance with which you sang the others on that happy evening" (in Riley 1986, 475)— and every dedication of a manuscript, treatise, or publication reveals the elegant posturing of poets and musicians hoping for a generous reward from the patron they flatter.

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[6] An example of the revered artistic status and the reputations gained by the best musicians is seen in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* where the singers Bidon and Cara are greatly praised for the sweetness of their singing and their ability to move the hearts of their listeners — "in a manner serene and full of plaintive sweetness, [Cara] touches and penetrates our souls, gently impressing a delightful sentiment upon them" (Castiglione 1959, 60)— and where "a certain motet that was sung before the Duchess pleased no one and was not thought good until it was known to be by Josquin de Près" (Castiglione 1959, 133). For more discussion of the Renaissance idea of artistic genius, see Wegman 1996.

In fact, social mobility was a fairly common aspiration and most easily attained within the arts and at court. The career of Pietro Aretino, one of the Borgias' favourite poets, ably demonstrates the flexibility of class boundaries. Aretino started life as the unknown, uneducated son of a courtesan and an unnamed shoemaker, who, at the age of thirteen, robbed his mother and ran away from home. He reveals in his cynical autobiography how he studied "the art of pleasing," and worked his way up from a domestic servant in the house of Roman merchant, to valet to the Pope, then became a gentleman of the Duke of Mantua, and finally was sought after by popes and princes. His popularity and persistence gained him independent living where he no longer had to flatter but could vent his egoism and his cynicism through his often vituperative poetry and prose:

> I who, in the liberty of many states, have managed to remain a free man, fleeing court forever, have set up here [at Venice] a perpetual tabernacle against the years which are advancing upon me, for the reason that here treason has no place, here favour can do no right, here the cruelty of the meretricious does not reign, here the insolence of the effeminate gives no commands, here there is no robbery, here no coercion, here no murder. . . . Bread eaten in one's own house does one more good than bread accompanied by fine viands at the table of another. I walk here with leisurely step, in the garden of the Muses, and no word drops from me which I have learned from any stinkpot of old. I wear the face of genius unmasked, and, not knowing an h, I can still teach those who know their l's and their m's . . . Thanks to Their Majesties, I am assured of a hundred crowns pension, which the Marchese del Vasto gives me, and others which the prince of Salerno pays to me, so that I have an income of six hundred, with about a thousand more which I make every year with a folio of paper and a bottle of ink, and this is the manner in which I live in this serenest of cities. (In Putnam 1933, 12-13)

Dubbed "the scourge of princes" by Ariosto, the Roman poet's rise from ignoble beginnings to the height of fame was so well known that his name became synonymous with social ascendancy: as he puts it, "three of my chamber maids or housekeepers have left me and become ladies, and they are called '*aretine*.' Such are the penalties of striving for distinction through a '*Ianua Sum Rudibus*'" (in Putnam 1933, 13).

Cynthia Lawrence describes the patronage relationship as one of mutual benefit: the artist "benefitted from the financial rewards of employment, from the prestige acquired in serving eminent persons, and from the opportunity to show his creative powers," while the patron "beautified her existence, enhanced her social standing and with luck immortalized her name after death" (Lawrence 1997, 13). In the northern courts the relationship between the duchesses and their favourite musicians —often those who were at once courtiers, performers and composers— ran deeper than this, for it took on the feudal hues that tinted everything in their chivalric courts. Economic rewards to the musician were often paid out in a cash salary augmented by gifts and benefices, equal to or surpassing that of another courtier. According to pay registers of 1508, Bartolomeo Tromboncino was paid an annual salary of 465 lire, almost half of Lucrezia's entire budget of 998 lire spent on singers, string players and a pipe and tabour player in 1508. His salary was surpassed only by that of Lucrezia's adviser, poet and humanist Antonio Tebaldeo (who had complained of wretched treatment at Mantua and left Isabella for Ferrara in 1502), who was paid 620 lire, and followed by that of Lucrezia's court painter Michele Costa, who received 372 lire annually. Like all the servants of Lucrezia's household, her musicians were also housed and fed within the Ducal palace. As a mark of special favour a musician might be awarded a house or lands outside the palace. For example, Marchetto Cara, the son of a Veronese tailor and barber, was granted several large material gifts in recognition of his exemplary service as singer, lutenist, composer and *maestro di cappella* (from 1511) during his long career at the court of Mantua (1494-1525). These included houses in the Via S. Agnese and the Contrada Pusterla of Mantua (his main residence), two estates in the surrounding countryside, and honorary Mantuan citizenship—a significant mark of favour bestowed in 1520 upon Cara and his family by Federico Gonzaga. Other gifts included clothing, instruments, and jewels, as well as the esteem and recognition of the great ladies of the Renaissance courts.

As teachers, performers, composers and musical confidantes, Tromboncino and Cara also merited the Duchesses' special notice and protection, almost as though they had been one of their preferred ladies-in-waiting. Isabella mourned with Marchetto over the death of his first wife, the singer Giovanna Moreschi, and she and Francesco had urged him during Giovanna's long intermittent illness to take time away from his duties to care for her, even allowing him to remain in Verona although his official leave was up (letter of 1 August 1505 from Francesco to Cara). After Giovanna's death in 1509, Isabella encouraged Marchetto's liaison with one of her *damigelle*, Barbara Leale, and Leale and Cara married in 1512. Isabella also went out of her way to protect her first lutenist-composer, Bartolomeo Tromboncino, writing several letters in his defense after the passionate composer killed his wife Antonia and wounded her lover Zoanmaria de Triomfo in 1499.

Less tangible benefits also accrued in the reputation which surrounded a favoured courtier or artist of one of the leading duchesses. Their acceptance into the admired circle of artists, poets, humanists and dilettantes which formed the cultured courts of the northern states, and the incredible artistic exchange and creative atmosphere which the courts supported, were inestimable boosts to a composer's career, and earned them great respect within their lifetime and lasting fame following it. Marchetto Cara was praised in Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano* as a singer who "move[s] us . . . by his singing, but only with a softer harmony. For, in a manner serene and full of plaintive sweetness, he touches and penetrates our souls, gently impressing a delightful sentiment upon them" (Castiglione 1959, 60). Yet Cara's immortalized performances at the court of Urbino only came about due to the friendship of his patron Isabella d'Este with her sister-in-law Elisabetta Gonzaga and the practice of lending musicians between families.

For all the protection, financial support, and artistic sponsorship they received, the musicians and courtiers of Isabella and Lucrezia's households were, in effect, subjects of the duke and duchess, and as such owed complete and unquestioning service to their *Signor* or *Patrona*. Particularly when leaving the court or travelling, they needed permission, and in times of war, a safe conduct from their employer. Isabella d'Este demonstrated this in 1491 when she wrote a safe conduct for her agent Johannes Ghiselin, sending him to France to find two young musicians for her court. As 'property' of the duke or duchess, musicians and courtiers could be transferred or lent to a family member or friend as easily as an instrument, and sometimes had little say over where and when they might perform: Antonio Tebaldeo, Isabella d'Este's former master poet had entered the service of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este after leaving Mantua (where, he complained, "he had been served rotten meat and vile wine and been treated wretchedly"; in Cloulas 1985, 272); but when Ippolito left Ferrara to once again take up his post in Rome, he bequeathed the poet to Lucrezia.[7]

Singer and lutenist Giovanni Angelo Testagrossa was in the service of the Este family for most of his career, first at Milan in the court of Beatrice (until 1495), then with Isabella (intermittently from 1495 until 1513; and again after 1519), and Ippolito (1513-1517). When he left Mantuan service in 1504, and again in 1510, Testagrossa was compelled to return the instruments he had received from Isabella. When he returned to her service, he was sent to Rome in 1510 as tutor to Isabella's young son, Federico (whose enforced tenure in Rome was part of a political treaty between warring Venice, Rome and Milan), but after insistent requests finally succeeded in securing Isabella's permission to enter the service of her daughter, Leonora, and husband Duke Francesco della Rovere at Urbino instead. In 1518 he once again pleaded with Isabella, this time to return to her service at Mantua, after an unsatisfying tenure with the Marchesa Anna Monferrato of Casale (to whom Isabella had recommended Testagrossa as having "sensitive fingers and an unexcelled method of teaching"; in Ness 2001, 316). Testagrossa returned to Mantua in 1519, and received Mantuan citizenship in 1525. Testagrossa's career demonstrates the ties of obligation which he was under to the Estensi. Although the Ferrarese ruling family and all their subsequent branches enabled the singer to have a full career as a performer and teacher —such that his renown was secured posthumously in Francesco Marcolini's *Intabolatura di liuto* (1536) which ranked him "among the most eminent musicians of the Petrucci generation" (Ness 2001, 316)— his career choices were undeniably subject to the whims and decisions of the patronage of the ruling Estensi, particularly Isabella.

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[7] See also the case of Tromboncino and other Mantuan musicians lent by Isabella d'Etse to the Marchese Guglielmo Paleologo of Casale in May 1499, quoted in chapter 2, page 72.

Isabella had demonstrated many times that her temper and position could have devastating consequences for any servant who opposed her will. In 1491 she castigated a young Mantuan artist who was working slower than she desired, saying: "since we have learned by experience that you are as slow in finishing your work as you are in everything else, we send this to remind you that for once you must change your nature, and that if our *studiola* is not finished on our return, we intend to put you into the dungeon of the castello. And this, we assure you, is no jest on our part" (in Prescott 1969, 168). Perhaps Isabella's temper and stubborn will was one cause of the departure of several musicians and courtiers who mysteriously left Mantua suddenly and without permission, many of them transferring to Lucrezia's court around 1502-1505.[8] When Tromboncino left Mantua for the second time without permission in April 1501 (the first was in 1495 when he fled to Venice and returned only at his father's insistence), his actions were greatly lamented by the Marchese Francesco Gonzaga. Gonzaga wrote to Marco Lando in Verona demanding that "Paula Pocin and [her] companions with recorders" neither sing nor play with Tromboncino because he had left Mantua "willfully and without permission, and having been better paid by us, and having had more favors, kindnesses, and liberties than any other of our courtiers, so that he must now suffer the pain [of our anger]"; he also advised Tromboncino not to leave the sanctuary of St. Mark's in Venice (in Prizer 1980, 58).[9]

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[8] A table of correspondence in Prizer's work on Marchetto Cara, *Courtly Pastimes*, lists Riciardetto (a piper and drummer), Charles de Launoy, Alessandro Agricola, and Johannes Ghiselin as all having left Mantua without permission in 1491, the year after Isabella's arrival in Mantua (Prizer 1980, 5-10). In the years 1502-1505 Niccolò da Corregio, Antonio Tebaldeo, Bartolomeo Tromboncino, and Paula and Paulo Poccino all formerly in the service of Isabella d'Este, appear at Lucrezia's court. Isabella exercised her stubborn will so much so that in a letter of 1513 her husband Francesco regrets, to his sorrow and shame that he was fated to have a wife who always wanted to do things her own way and according to her own mind: "A noi dole et horamai havemo vergogna di havere per nostra sorte una mogliere di quella sorte che sempre vol far a suo modo a di suo cervello" (in Brown 1997, 63).

[9] "Havemo ordinato ala Paula Poccino et compagni che subito se ne vengono cum li fiauti. Ben vi pregamo che, secundo il commandamento che hanno da noi, non gli astringati ad cantare nè sonare cum Tromboncino, perchè non volemo che l'habbia questa gratia, essendosi partito da noi tristamente et senza licentia, et essendo stato da noi melio pagato, et havendo havute più gratie,

Although few musicians can attest to the upward social mobility enjoyed by Pietro Aretino, Tromboncino's career demonstrates a certain independence from the perception of vassalage which, for instance, held Giovanni Testagrossa to the Este court. Though his family background is uncertain (he was likely from a petty bourgeois musical family, the son of one Bernardino Piffaro), Tromboncino commenced his Mantuan career as a humble trombonist, and his rise within the court social hierarchy only began when he was taken on as singer, lutenist, teacher and composer by the Marchesa Isabella in 1491. From there, although he always signed himself the faithful servant of his patrons, he was referred to by Duke Francesco as a courtier, and accorded the more exalted title of *Signor* in letters by his contemporaries. His prominent place in the Mantuan court, combined with his dramatic flights from that city and 'willful' changing of residence and court allegiance, indicates the behaviour of a man who considers himself an independent courtier in contracted service, rather than a hired servant and vassal of the Prince.

Like Aretino, Tromboncino eventually escaped the perceived servitude of a court position; by 1518 he had set up a music school for gentlewomen in his house in Venice, successfully extricating himself from debt, bringing his wife and family from Ferrara, and eventually gaining Venetian citizenship. The shifting structures of economic strength and political power which characterized the sixteenth century allowed the pervasive circulation of a humanist ideal begun with Dante and continued with Poggio, Niccolò Niccoli and Lorenzo Medici which claimed that personal merit, and moral and intellectual excellence, were the true foundations for nobility. These ideals, encouraged by the patronage of the northern duchesses, empowered the kind of social mobility that Tromboncino and Aretino enjoyed, especially in the cultured courts where artistic skill was a recognized expression of intellectual eminence.

During his tenure as teacher and composer at the Mantuan and Ferrarese courts,

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carecie et libertà in casa nostra che alcuno altro nostro cortegiano, dilchè cum il tempo ni ha da patire la pena. Benchè il serrà ben consiliato ad non si partire de le terre de San Marco, perchè in esse l'ha ad essere tanto securo quanto in paradiso, non persuo merito, ma per reverentia a la Serenissima Signoria nostra" (letter of 28 April, 1501; in Prizer 1980, 186fn)

Tromboncino was employed, not as a musician within the ducal musical establishment, but as a servant in the household or female court of the Marchesa and Duchess. Within the confines of her husband's or brother's duchy, a noblewoman of wealth and rank was expected to set up her own separate household, through which she housed, fed and remunerated her ladies and courtiers, a secretary and steward, chaplain, dressmaker and doctor, advisors, cooks, maids, and other servants and members of the court including musicians. In addition to highly regarded artists, intellectuals and courtier-musicians like Leonardo da' Vinci and Niccolò da Corregio who performed for the Duchess of Milan's court, the duchesses of the northern courts regularly employed salaried musicians as performers, tutors and composers.[10] In this area, the northern courts at the turn of the sixteenth century provided a model for women's behavior that was upheld in Italy throughout the ensuing century. The type of musicians maintained by a lady as part of her personal household were dictated by the noblewoman's role in music education, patronage and performance at court —a role that was peculiarly differentiated from that of the reigning nobleman.

The external function of music patronage to increase one's fame and show off the wealth and magnificence of the court and the ruling family motivated both duke and duchess; but the musical styles and ensembles employed in obtaining this goal differed according to their gender. While a duke's interests extended to music of the battle field, theatre, and ducal chapel —music that could publically extol his military victories and uphold his image as a true Christian prince— a duchess's musical involvement centred on secular vocal music for court entertainment, private gatherings, and general cultural edification, and the musicians in her entourage reflected this difference. In 1508 Duchess Lucrezia Borgia, for instance, spent 5.4% of her annual revenue of 6000 ducats on singers (both men and women), string players, a pipe and tabour player and a dancing master.[11] A similar group was maintained by the Marchesa of Mantua, Isabella d'Este, with the addition of a full time keyboardist.[12] Notable within these two households was the renowned frottolist Bartolomeo Tromboncino, who functioned as a singer, lutenist, teacher and composer at the Marchesa's court until he left for Lucrezia Borgia's court at Ferrara in 1502.[13] Singers, string players, keyboardists, dancers and dancing masters, with the requisite pipe and tabour player, were all a part of the typical musical entourage maintained by a court lady.

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[10] The difference between courtiers who were also musicians and musicians who aspired to court appointments will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

[11] These figures are taken from a Ferrarese payroll of 1508 (in Prizer 1989, 136); Lucrezia's budget for chamber musicians is also discussed in Prizer 1985, 11-13.

The assemblage of larger and more diverse courtly ensembles *da camera*, with an emphasis on accomplished string players and secular singers, differed from their fifteenth-century precursors in several important ways. William Prizer notes that at Mantua, for instance, the musicians at court before the arrival of Isabella d'Este were of two types: instrumentalists —"most frequently mentioned in the documents are the players of shawm and trombone, . . . [as well as] trumpeters, whose duties were often more ceremonial than musical, and the players of three-hole pipe and tabor, who played for the dance"— and vocal improvisers —singers who would sing and recite to string accompaniment on the *cithara*, *viola*, *liuto* or *lira*— who were "well represented at the Mantuan court" and held "in great demand by other Italian courts" (Prizer 1980, 3). The changes are primarily linked to the influential activity of early-sixteenth-century humanist noblewomen. Singers, lutenists, keyboardists and composers number among Isabella's and Lucrezia's court music groups, while there is a dearth of brass and wind players. Players of wind instruments such as trumpets and trombones, used principally at this time for outdoor events including carnivals and military operations, were typically not regularly employed by women; rather, their patronage centred on chamber singers and string players. As Prizer remarks, Lucrezia and Isabella's "establishment of musicians specializing in secular vocal music and string music were distinguished" (Prizer 1985, 19 & 30).

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[12] For a complete list of Mantuan court musicians mentioned in Gonzaga correspondence from 1490-1500, see Prizer 1980, 5-10.

[13] Prizer dates Tromboncino's service to Isabella from 1489 to 1504 (Prizer 1985, 20-24); James Haar, however, argues more conclusively that Tromboncino's service to Lucrezia dates from 1502 to 1513 (Haar 2001). Tromboncino fled Mantua in 1499 after killing his wife, but apparently was pardoned and returned only to leave without permission in 1501, and sell his Mantuan residence in 1502. He is not mentioned in Mantuan correspondence again until 1504 when he composed a setting of Petrarch's *Si è debile il filo* at the request of Isabella d'Este. He performed at Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso d'Este's wedding in Ferrara in 1502, and Ferrarese letters indicate Duke Ercole's intention to appointment Tromboncino to Lucrezia's household after the dismissal of her Spanish attendants that same year. Tromboncino appears on Lucrezia's pay records from 1506-1508; earlier records are lost.

Ensembles of wind instruments were still maintained by wealthy men, and, if necessary, noblewomen who usually had little need of their own *piffari* of trombones and shawms or corps of trumpeters could hire instrumentalists for use on festive occasions. Lucrezia often borrowed musicians from her husband Duke Alfonso I or brother-in-law Cardinal Ippolito d'Este to supplement her own entourage, especially during carnival time. But none of the household musicians maintained by the northern duchesses (beyond the requisite dancing master who might play pipe and tabour) were wind players. This instrumental bias within musical patronage reflects the educational opportunities and performance abilities typical of Renaissance women. Very few women (and few nobles of either gender) actually learned to play wind instruments, simply because it was considered unfeminine and unaristocratic. As Castiglione remarks, loud instruments were though unfit for a lady, just as "such robust and strenuous manly exercises" as handling weapons, riding, playing tennis, and wrestling, are not "becoming to a woman"(Castiglione 1959, 210). "The musical instruments she plays," Castiglione states, "ought to be appropriate. . . . Consider what an ungainly thing it would be to see a woman playing drums, fifes, trumpets, or other like instruments; and this because their harshness hides and removes that suave gentleness which so adorns a woman in every act" (Castiglione 1959, 210).

Not explicit in what Castiglione says is the fact that wind instruments (like many "manly exercises") were associated with public functions such as carnival processions, military operations, civic duties and secular entertainments. In some cases such instrumentalists held other civic or military positions, such as at Milan where the ducal and civic wind players also acted as the watch; Paul Merkley cites a council order of 1479 which requires the ducal players to wear their uniforms when they did their rounds at night (Merkley 1999, 262). Discouraging women from playing wind instruments, even for private pleasure, shielded them from any inappropriate connection with active civic participation or public duty. Lute, harpsichord, viol and harp therefore remained the most popular instruments for a lady to play, precisely because the stringed instruments were considered noble and refined, well-suited to a court lady's aristocratic position, the "suave gentleness" of her gender, and the private performing space which she was encouraged to occupy. The attention of the noble amateur to singing and accompanying stringed instruments distinguished the aristocratic performer, both male and female, from musicians of the working class and thus earned the approbation of Castiglione:

> All keyboard instruments are harmonious because their consonances are most perfect, and they lend themselves to the performance of many things that fill the soul with musical sweetness. And no less delightful is the music of four viols which is most suave and exquisite. The human voice gives ornament and much grace to all these instruments, wherewith I deem it enough if our Courtier be acquainted (but the more he excels in them the better) without troubling himself about those which Minerva and Alcibiades scorned, [ie. wind instruments: see Aristotle, *Politics* VIII, ch. 6; and Plutarch, *Life of Alcibiades*, ch. 2] because it seems that they have something unpleasant about them. (Castiglione 1959, 105)

There are records of women who played wind instruments in the sixteenth century. Paula Poccino and her recorder playing companions ("Paula Poccino et compagni cum li fiauti") performed at a festival in Verona in 1502, although she was better known as a singer employed at the Gonzaga court. Later in the century, the Pellizzari sisters, Lucia and Isabella, became renowned for playing the *cornetto* and trombone, and the convent orchestra of San Vito in Ferrara included *cornetti*, trombones, cornamuses, and recorders, even though "being women they cannot easily manipulate Cornetti and Trombones, which are the most difficult of instruments" (Hercole Bottrigari; in Neuls-Bates 1982, 48). Numerous "concert" paintings involve women playing flutes or recorders, such as the famous portrait of a female trio performing "Jouissance vous donneray" (*Three Young Women Performing Claudin de Sermissy's Chanson "Jouyssance vous donneray,"* Master of the Three-Quarter Figures, ca. 1530). Yet despite this evidence of wind instruments being performed by women throughout the century, the northern duchesses clearly shunned them, and in doing so reinforced the idea that string instruments which could accompany a beautiful singing voice, and were also soft enough to be heard in a private, domestic space, were more amenable to aristocratic female performance. Thus the harp, lute and harpsichord remained the "appropriate" instruments for courtly ladies to learn.

Prizer attributes a humanistic motive to the remarked disdain of wind instruments and preference for strings, displayed particularly by Isabella d'Este. He reminds us that Plato and Aristotle had considered winds to be less noble than strings, and cites the two myths concerning Apollo and Pan, and Pallas Athena, in which string instruments are demonstrated to be superior in musical quality and expression (Prizer 1982, 114).[14] This humanist-inclined sentiment, along with the rules of court etiquette later codified by Castiglione, no doubt predisposed the sixteenth-century lady to employ secular singers and string players rather than brass or wind instrumentalists. Yet it was the function of music within her court activities, along with her income, that ultimately dictated which musicians she would employ and which music she would perform. Prizer is certainly correct when he states that "with frottolists, singers, string players ,and a dance instructor, Lucrezia was well furnished with the requisites for secular vocal music designed for court entertainment" (Prizer 1985, 12). The musical education, private and courtly performance, and personal tastes of Isabella, Beatrice, Elisabetta and Lucrezia is reflected in their employment of musicians within their households. The elevated status of secular singers and string players as members of a duchess's intimate household (many of whom were also poets, artisans or members of the minor nobility), and their segregation from the salaried wind players and choristers of the ducal *cappella* and military *piffari* was intrinsically aligned with the northern duchesses' re-creation of a chivalric court of leisure and cultural activity.

Prizer offers a similar argument against the noblewoman's apparent apathy toward chapel choirs, citing both a lack of need and the demands of court etiquette to explain the absence of sacred singers in a duchess's employ. "A case might be made that she had no need of these musicians, since her husband employed them . . . [yet] it seems that the absence of these musicians must have something to do with the proprieties of the era, in which women were not expected to have in their households loud instruments, the rightful attributes of the warlike prince, nor a personal chapel" (Prizer 1985, 12-13). It is logical to think that a lady had little need nor would it have been considered proper for her to maintain a large group of male singers like the court *cappella*, for the Duchesses of Ferrara, Mantua and Urbino would have celebrated divine mass in the court chapel alongside their husbands. But the lack of involvement of women in the ducal *cappella* is not as straightforward as Prizer assumes. It certainly is not borne out by the example of Beatrice d'Este, whose favourite tenor, Johannes Cordier, was also a singer in the ducal chapel, and who regularly travelled with the court *cappella* and had mass sung for her by the Milanese chapel singers.

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[14] See Prizer 1982, 112-115 for a more detailed discussion of courtly, humanist and classical reasons for the inferiority of wind instruments in general and Isabella d'Este's distaste for wind instruments in particular.

Like her sister Isabella and future sister-in-law Lucrezia, Beatrice d'Este maintained string players, keyboardists and dancing masters, and herself played the lute, viol and clavichord—but her deepest passion was singing. She took such delight in her singers that, like her father, she never travelled without at least two or three of her favourites, and on occasion took the whole ducal choir with her. In 1491, when she made a recuperative visit to Genoa, Giovanni Cristoforo Romano —the acclaimed Roman sculptor who was a tenor in Beatrice's retinue— was one of the singers who accompanied her, although she travelled *incognito* and took only a few persons in her suite. Cristoforo, as well as her two other favourites, the young Giovanni Angelo Testagrossa, who sang "like a seraph," and the wonderful Flemish tenor Johannes Cordier, often sang secular vocal music for the Duchess to enlighten her leisure hours (Bellincioni; in Cartwright 1928, 152). But Cordier also regularly performed with the Ducal *cappella* and was among the singers maintained specifically to sing mass for her and her courtiers. In this area, the Duchess's interests were closely interwoven with those of her husband, for Beatrice seemed to take equal interest in the *cappella* as in her own music *da camera*.

In May 1493 Beatrice undertook an important trip to Venice, accompanied by her mother Eleanora d'Aragona, Duchess of Este, her brother Alfonso d'Este and his new bride Anna Sforza (Ludovico's niece). As always she travelled with her regular singers, but this time her favourites were supplemented with other members of the Milanese Ducal choir. In the correspondence with her husband who remained at Milan, Beatrice describes the use of her singers both in private and public settings:

> I wrote to you yesterday of our arrival at Chioggia. This morning I heard mass in a chapel of the house where I lodged. The singers assisted, and I felt the greatest spiritual delight in hearing them, Messer Cordier as usual doing his part very well, as he did also yesterday morning. Certainly his singing is the greatest consolation possible. (May 27, 1493; in Cartwright 1928, 192)[15]
>
> This morning, as soon as I was dressed, I heard mass sung in my own rooms. Messer Cordier sang, and, as usual, did his part admirably, which pleased me greatly, both on account of the rare delight which his talent gives me, and because on this occasion the gentlemen who had been sent to see me by the Doge were also present, and expressed the greatest admiration for his singing. (May 28, 1493; in Cartwright 1928, 192)

Beatrice's visit to Venice on this occasion was both pleasurable and political. Although still only seventeen years old, Beatrice travelled as her husband's ambassador and spokeswoman, a tactful move which softened the political import of this Milanese visit while *Il Moro* was deep into critical negotiations with both Charles VIII of France and the Emperor Maximilian. Accompanied by four experienced councillors and several Milanese gentlemen and ladies of rank along with their attendants, her entourage made an impressive sight, for together with the Ferrarese contingent, the whole party numbered 1200 persons.[16] The inclusion of members of Milan's famed court *cappella* on this trip was part of the grand display of Ludovico's wealth, culture, and magnificence as well as the extended friendship he hoped to have reciprocated by the Doge. On May 30, 1493, Beatrice writes yet again of the reception of the Milanese singers:

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[15] These letters are also partially transcribed in Merkley 1999.

[16] Those named include the councillors Count Girolamo Tuttavilla, Galeazzo Visconti, Angelo Taenti, and Pietro Landriano, as well as Antonio Trivulzio, Bishop of Como, Francesco Sforza and his wife, Conte Girolamo da Figino, Messer Sigsimondo and Messer Raynaldo and their daughters. During the visit, Beatrice twice addressed the Signory, who, although impressed by her youthful eloquence and wisdom, would give her no direct answer to Milan's proffered friendship and delicate entreaties as to Ludovico's claim to the ducal title.

> To continue my relation of what is happening here day by day, I must now inform you that this morning my illustrious mother, Don Alfonso, Madonna Anna, and I, with all our company, set out for St. Mark's, where the Prince invited both us and our singers to assist at mass and see the Treasury. . . . Here our trumpets sounded from a loggia in front of the church, and we found the prince, who advanced to meet us at the doors of St. Mark's, and placing himself as before, between my illustrious mother and myself, led us to the high altar, where we found the priest already vested. There we knelt down with the prince and said the confession, and then took the seats prepared for us and heard mass, which the priest and his assistants sang with great solemnity, and our singers did their part, and their singing greatly pleased both the Prince and all who were present, especially that of Cordier, who always takes great pains to do honour to your Highness. (In Cartwright 1928, 199)

Milan's famed singers were calculated to make as much of a favourable impression during the visit as were the magnitude of the Milanese contingent or the Duchess's extravagant gowns and jewels.[17] On the Venetians' part, the incredible *feste* held in Beatrice's honour, the tour of the treasury, the display of "noble Venetian ladies, one hundred and thirty-two in all, richly adorned with jewels" (letter from Beatrice to Ludovico May 31, 1493; in Cartwright 1928, 200), the pomp and ceremony which accompanied the ladies' visits to Venice's famous buildings and antiquities— all these were pitted against the magnificent display of the visiting Milanese. Not to be outshone musically, the Venetians treated Beatrice and her court to a concert given by a community of Augustinian nuns, famous for the excellence of their singing (as well as for the many scandals attached to their society; see Cartwright 1928, 198).

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[17] Duke Ludovico's secretary Niccolo de' Negri described the excitement of the Venetians for Beatrice's attire, no less than her own person, in a letter to his lord of June 1, 1493:

> On every occasion the duchess appeared clad in new and beautiful robes and glittering jewels. Her jewels, indeed, were the wonder of the whole town. But I shall not be wrong if I say that the finest jewel of all is herself—my dear and most excellent Madonna, whose gracious ways and charming manners filled all the people of Venice with the utmost delight and enthusiasm, so that your Highness may well count himself what he is—the happiest and most fortunate prince in the whole world. (In Cartwright 1928, 204)

The trip to Venice was not the only time Beatrice travelled with the Ducal choir; in 1494 she rode out to Annona to meet King Charles VIII, and as usual she travelled with her choir and musicians. At the Court of Annona, theatrical and musical entertainments were given during which the musicians performed and as a token of special favour, Beatrice and her ladies danced before the King. Including court or chapel singers in one's entourage was not unique to Beatrice —her father Duke Ercole I of Ferrara regularly travelled with his musicians, and the Marchese Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua took musicians with him into the field during his military campaigns and even had performers with him during his imprisonment in Venice (Prizer 1980, 12). Isabella and Lucrezia would certainly have included their favourite chamber singers in their suite when visiting other courts, especially for festive occasions. When Isabella went to Ferrara for her brother Alfonso's wedding to Lucrezia Borgia, Mantuan musicians, including singer-lutenists Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Marchetto Cara, were among the entertainers who performed during the week-long wedding festivities. What is unique about the Duchess of Bari is not that she travelled with her singers, but that she was so concerned with the chapel choir which was normally the province of the Duke himself. Beatrice's involvement with singers of the Ducal chapel is somewhat of an anomaly, for we find no evidence that her contemporaries Isabella, Lucrezia, Elisabetta, or her mother Eleanora ever travelled with an entire *cappella* of singers.

Two interesting precedents which deviate significantly from the standards set by Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia also have ties to Milan, and may have influenced Beatrice's interest in the Ducal *cappella*, or at least her husband's indulgence in allowing her involvement with the choir. Iolanda, Duchess of Savoy, and her sister Bona, Duchess of Milan, both maintained a complement of household musicians which did not conform to the model of strings and secular vocalists only. Iolanda kept a famous chapel of French and Burgundian singers, many of whom Galeazzo Maria Sforza enticed away from Savoy when he and Bona set up their own Milanese chapel. Bona maintained the chapel of Milanese singers herself after Galeazzo's assassination in 1476; many of the singers were clerics who held benefices from the church, but several were offered diplomatic or state administrative positions. Paul and Lora Merkley note that under the Sforzas, some of the Milanese singers even attained the status of "familiar" to the Duke or Duchess (Merkley 1999, xxiii). Even when pressured to disband the choir by the ducal secretary, Cicco Simonetta, who legally shared her regency, Bona of Savoy released only twelve of the twenty-plus singers, retaining the best of her deceased husband's chapel. Merkley writes that "Bona's influence continued to be felt on the design and order of the chapel as it would have been from its inception" (Merkley 1999, 237).

In addition to her interest in the ducal chapel, Bona also maintained secular musicians in her own court, which included brass and wind players. Shortly before her wedding in 1468, a budget for her Milanese household was drawn up which included three singers at 240 ducats, and 300 ducats to be spent on pipers, viol players, lutenists and tambourine players. This may not seem unusual if the 'pipers' are interpreted as pipe and tabour players maintained for dancing. But in a letter from Galeazzo Sforza to his mother Bianca Visconti concerning the household of Bona, his duchess-to-be, he mentions "tre piffari, uno trombone," and "uno tamburrino"; in his discussion of this report, Merkley proposes that Bona intended to maintain either "an *alta* ensemble for dancing, or a wind band for the performance of instrumental arrangements of three or four-part vocal music" (Merkley 1999, 181). In either case, the inclusion of such wind instruments in a lady's secular music ensemble had certainly decreased in popularity with the next generation of duchesses.

The precedent of noblewomen who supported or maintained both a chapel choir and players of wind instruments accentuates Isabella's deliberate detachment from those 'public' musical institutions, along with the behaviour of Elisabetta Gonzaga and Lucrezia Borgia who mirrored her. Although no less powerful or politically active than Bona of Savoy, Isabella d'Este consciously constructed a public image that conformed to a rising humanist outlook which encouraged a lady to be content with the secular music of her private court. The employment of secular singers and string players attests to Isabella's patronage of only those artistic pursuits which were considered most noble, refined and above all feminine, strengthening her position as the leading arbiter of culture within the protocols of courtly society.

Musical Genres Patronized and Performed by the Northern Duchesses

Beatrice's interest in the Milanese court *cappella* echoes her Savoy predecessors; however, her involvement ends with an appreciation of fine male singing, and does not extend to commissioning compositions. Although a duchess may have taken an interest in the notable *cantadore*, *compositore* and *maestri* employed by their husbands in the Ducal chapels (as Beatrice, Isabella and Lucrezia certainly did), commissioning occasional compositions or borrowing a teacher for herself, her children or her ladies, she would not have offered regular employment to such notable masters and composers —her income and her interests, derived from her gender and status at court, would have precluded such an option.[18] Much less would these women have commissioned the grand masses and sacred works which such chapel choirs sang—there is no *Missa Beatrice Dux* to compare with Josquin's *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrarie.* Instead of the large masses and other sacred and dramatic works performed at divine office or on special feast days by the court *cappella,* the Duchesses of Ferrara and Mantua were concerned with commissioning secular chamber music of a type that could be readily enjoyed or performed by the ladies and gentlemen of the court during their leisure hours.

Catherine King notes a similar trend in the patronage of art: "fourteenth-century commissions display something of the capacities of these sorts of matrons who could well be called 'lady patrons' in the sense that all were tightly confined to reflecting the feminine to be no other than punctiliously devout and impeccably virtuous" (King 1992, 373). King notes that Isabella d'Este, because of her gender, did not have the freedom to choose artistic subject matter outside the conventional depiction of virtue and goodness that her brother Alfonso, for instance, in his depiction of the pleasures of Bacchus and immoralities of the gods and goddesses, did: "a powerful man could flout the moral conventions of his day in the safety of *all'antica* style, and in the licenced area of a collector's piece. A woman, no matter how high her status, could not" (King 1992, 391).

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[18] Isabella certainly involved herself in Duke Francesco Gonzaga's musical efforts; even before her marriage, for instance, she wrote to him about the musicians at his court, concerning herself with their salary and treatment:

> "I have heard that your Excellency has allowed Antonio, your player of the three-hole pipe and tabor, to leave and that this is taking place because of the insistence that perhaps he has made for not having had that salary that it appears to him that he merits according to the good treatment that the other instrumentalists of your Lord enjoy. Since he bears such a good reputation among the other players of pipe and tabor and musicians, I would be particularly pleased for him to remain with your Lordship, hoping myself to enjoy his merit at some time with the good will that you may wish to retain him still in your service" (letter of October 15, 1489; in Prizer 1980, 11)

The same gender restraints that restricted the subject matter of paintings commissioned by women also restricted their musical patronage to those genres which were considered refined and feminine. This gendered demarcation of genre particularly reflects the division of public and private which governed upper and middle-class women's participation in various social and economic roles. However, in the commissioning of visual art, certain examples can be found where women circumvented the gender restrictions placed on her patronage activities, namely in the commissioning of publicly viewed works such as an altarpiece, chapel or commemorative family statuary. These pieces, while invading male public space, nevertheless signalled a womanly devotion to family, husband and religion. Yet exceedingly few examples of similarly overturned conventions can be seen in women's patronage of music, and almost none in their commissioning of specific works.[19] Instead, by working within the conventions governing female music performance and patronage, the northern duchesses effectively explored the potential of music to present a carefully fashioned identity in line with their own status and taste.

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[19] In some cases the "matronage" of public artworks went beyond what was considered appropriate in its familial and devotional orientation, for example: the commissioning of a "very large and public image (overturning the normal expectations that women inhabit private and diminutive spheres)" (King 1992, 373); the funding of buildings such as Margareta Vitturi's bequest which funded the chapel of the Virgin Annunciate at San Michele in Isola; founding institutions as Sophie Charlotte of Prussia did with the Berlin Academy of Sciences; or the commissioning of civic monuments. A statue of the poet Virgil standing on a pedestal clad in senatorial robes and laurel wreath was designed by Jacopo d'Atri and Giovanni Pontano at the behest of Isabella d'Este in 1499; a drawing and letters discussing the commission attest that the statue was commissioned as a gift to the city of Mantua, but the plan was never realized. The only similar occurence in music might be seen in Maria Maddalena d'Austria, Archduchess of Florence who suggested to composer Francesca Caccini the subject of her opera *La Liberazione di Ruggiero*, which not only launched this female composer into the male domain of large musical works, but retold the familiar *Orlando* story from a woman's point of view.

The attention of high ranking noblewomen to secular, courtly musical activity instigated an important development in Renaissance vocal music composition. The northern court *cappelle*, which soon rivalled church and cathedral choirs in musical excellence, kept *oltremonte* composers like Josquin Desprez, Jacob Obrecht and Heinrich Isaac employed writing much-heralded grand masses and motets commissioned by the Dukes of Ferrara, Mantua and Milan. But it was the intimate court chambers of the northern duchesses which offered Italian secular musicians an artistic, humanist environment. The duchesses supported amateur chamber performances and spawned such influential genres as the *frottola*, directing popular interest toward Italian musicians and secular vocal music. Iain Fenlon notes that "the function of music is a determinate of form and style, and when function changes new forms and styles arise while old ones tend to be modified and die out" (Fenlon 1980, 6). The patronage and performance of music which functioned primarily as a refined courtly exercise for the duchesses of the North Italian courts aided in the demise of the improvised *recitare* and enabled the birth of the *frottola*, increasing the scope of Italian secular vocal music which would continue to grow throughout the century.

The music performed and patronized by the northern duchesses was first of all motivated by their gendered identity. The foremost image cultivated by the leading ladies of the northern courts was that of the presiding mistress of court culture, an image which drew on the lingering ideals of chivalry and courtly love engendered in Medieval Provence and fostered in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the French and Burgundian courts. The Court of Charles the Bold at Burgundy was extremely influential upon Italian courts in the mid-fifteenth century; "Italian princes, including an Este, a Gonzaga, and Ferrante of Aragon-Naples, spent quite some time at the [Burgundian] court. . . . Pictures, manuscripts and tapestries all came from the Netherlands to Florence, Naples, Milan, and Urbino, as indeed did painters and musicians" (Paravicini 1991, 94). Paravicini states that "the courts of Ferrara and Mantua seem to have been particularly strongly influenced by Burgundy" and notes that "the Schifanoia palace in Ferrara was decorated with frescoes in 1458-1460 depicting ladies in Burgundian costume" (Paravcini 1991, 94). The Este and Gonzaga princesses were no doubt affected by the influx of French and Burgundian culture still ongoing during their youth, and they retained certain aspects of it when they established their own courts. Along with other trappings of French chivalry (jousts and tournaments, for instance, continued to be fought at Ferrara well into the sixteenth century), French and Burgundian music, particularly the courtly chanson, remained influential into the sixteenth century.

One of the strongest links to the Medieval Courts of Love is seen in the continuing use of French music and poetry within the North Italian courts. As Prizer notes, French chansons (an inclusive term which subsumes the *formes fixes* of rondeau, ballade and virelay as well as other poetic forms such as the bergerette) "formed an integral part of the repertory of secular music at court" (Prizer 1989, 142). Curiously, Prizer describes the performance of French repertoire as being "sung for the court's pleasure by the northern, French-speaking musicians of the chapel" (Prizer 1989, 142).[20] Yet French chansons and their Italian translations or imitations were regularly performed by Italian courtiers and ladies. A letter from Galeazzo Maria Sforza's tutor reports in 1452 that the young prince's musical studies are progressing well—he has already learnt eight French chansons, and takes pleasure in learning new ones every day: "ancora atende benissimo ad imparare cantare et à imparato octo canti francesi e oni dì ni impara de li altri" (Scaramuccia Balbo, letter of March 28, 1452; in Einstein 1949, I:9).

Beatrice and Isabella d'Este would certainly have been familiar with the chansons of Josquin Desprez, Heinrich Isaac, Jacob Obrecht, and Loyset Compère, who all either served at the Ferrarese court or were patronized by Duke Ercole, and the girls no doubt learned to sing the chansons of their music teacher Johannes Martini. Beatrice may even have had recourse in her youth to such Neapolitan collections as *The Mellon Chansonnier* (Naples, 1470s) or the Biblioteca Colombina MS 5.I.43 (Naples, 1480s). Isabella d'Este herself owned two books of French songs. An inventory of Isabella's *grotta* (the special room she had prepared to house and display her prized antiquities, musical instruments and manuscripts) taken in 1542, three years after her death, includes one book of chansons and another volume of French music. The inventory transcribed in Luzio and Renier lists the following musical editions: [1] "un libro di musica francesca in carta pegorina coperta di veulto turchino con li fornimenti d'artento"; [6] "la musica di Franchino [Gaufurio] scutta a mano in foglio coperto di rosso"; and [80] "un libro di canzone francese" (in Fenlon 1980, 21 fn.). Fenlon speculates that [1] may be "Rome Biblioteca Casanatense MS 2856, which bears a subsequently altered version of the Este and Gonzaga arms and contains a largely Ferrarese repertory," and that the chansonnier was likely prepared for Isabella's betrothal in 1480 with additions made for her wedding in 1490 (Fenlon 1980, 21 fn.).[21]

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[20] Prizer echoes E. J. Dent who maintains that the "singers of frottole were sometimes the composers as well, but in any case hired professionals," denying the aristocratic amateur a place in secular vocal performance (Dent 1990, 35).

The Casanatense manuscript, of which Arthur Wolff has made a detailed study, is a chansonnier in choir-book format, containing 123 polyphonic compositions in the style of the Franco-Flemish school, c.1450-1500. It includes works by twenty-four composers, seven with Ferrarese connections —including Johannes Martini, Alessandro Agricola, Johannes Ghiselin, and Jacob Obrecht— representing the majority of the compositions. Like Fenlon, Wolff also suggests that the manuscript may have been prepared to celebrate Isabella's betrothal to Gian Francesco Gonzaga in 1480. He cites the positioning of the Este and Gonzaga coats of arms toward the front of the manuscript as a major piece of evidence for this assumption. But, he cautions, "no record has been found of a manuscript at the Mantuan court belonging to Isabella which seems to be descriptive of Rome 2856" (Wolff 1971, 28). Instead, he finds that an inventory of Duke Ercole's library taken in 1495 lists at least twelve chanson collections and musical manuscripts. In addition, a description of an illuminated "libro da canto" ordered to be produced by the master calligrapher and gilder, Andrea de le Viese on October 15, 1485, "fits perfectly the most distinctive features of Rome 2856" (Wolff 1971, 30).[22]

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[21] Dates have been given as variously as 1485 (Arthur Wolff) and 1500 (José Llorens).

Whether or not the existing Casanatense manuscript is the one listed in the inventory of Isabella's *grotta*, the French chansons recorded in it are entirely representative of songs Isabella and the other northern duchesses would have been familiar with. Interestingly, despite the evidence of two French songbooks in her possession and reference to her singing chansons sent to her by Martini (see the following letter from Martini to Isabella), Prizer's intense focus on Isabella as a patron of Italian music causes him boldly to declare that Isabella "did not speak or understand French, and for this reason was not interested in the chanson" (Prizer 1985, 18). Yet even if later in her life Isabella was not fluent in French (Prizer cites documents that reveal Isabella could not communicate with Renée of France, Duchess of Ferrara, upon their meeting in 1528), it is difficult to believe that this leader of style and taste would have 'no interest' in one of the most popular genres of her time.

In a letter of April 18, 1491, Johannes Martini (the majority of whose forty-four secular compositions are on French texts) writes to Isabella, "Most Illustrious and excellent marchioness, etc. I am sending a song to your ladyship to provide you some recreation and to recommend that your ladyship ought to sing it frequently in order to take good advantage of the practice [it affords]. Always I commend myself to your ladyship. Dated at Ferrara the 18th day of April, 1491" (in Evans 1975, x). Around the same time, Gustave Reese tells us, "Duke Ercole sent Isabella his own book of songs, in order that she might transcribe her favourite melodies, begging her not to keep it too long but to return it as soon as possible" (in Reese *Renaissance* 1954, 222).

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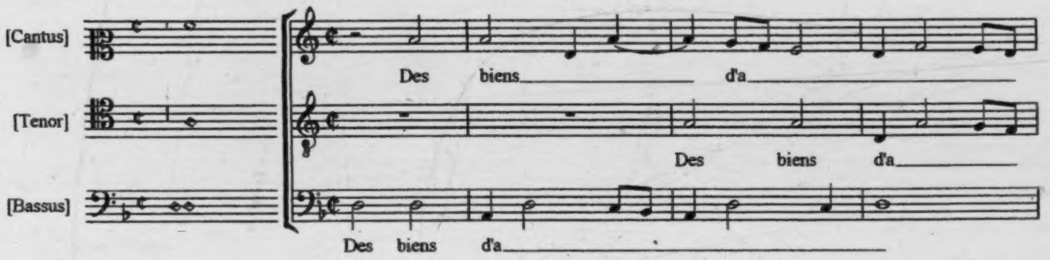
[22] The 1485 record further describes this manuscript as being intended "for the wind players" (*a la pifaresca*) of the Este court, a fact that, combined with the absence of full texts, leads Prizer to argue that Isabella d'Este was not interested in singing French chansons. However, it seems more logical to conclude from this evidence that MS Rome 2856, the "sole surviving Ferrarese chansonnier from Ercole's reign" (Prizer 1989, 142), is not the same chansonnier recorded in the inventory of Isabella's grotta. It is certainly difficult to believe that a collection of melodies intended for the court *piffari* of Ferrara would end up in Isabella's treasured collection, especially given her distaste of wind instruments, if she had no interest in performing French chansons herself.

Des biens d'amours by Johannes Martini is an excellent example of a popular French chanson that the northern duchesses might have sung or listened to. Although the volume of the composer's sacred works far outweighs that of his secular output, Martini's secular works enjoyed wide popularity during his lifetime. These songs can be found in twenty-four important European manuscripts and publications, including the Glogauer Liederbuch and Petrucci's early musicprints.[23] Perhaps the most widely copied chanson, *Des biens d'amours* exists in ten versions, including the Biblioteca Casanatense manuscript owned by Isabella.[24] One of thirty-one known three-part chansons by Martini (the remainder of his forty-four secular compositions are à 4), *Des biens d'amours* displays characteristics consistent with the late fifteenth-century Franco-Flemish chanson which had all but swept away the older, more conservative Burgundian chanson. Although still in three voices (Gallico doubts the attribution of an extant four-part version to Martini), a fuller texture and judicious use of imitative counterpart skillfully integrates the three parts into a rich and cohesive whole.

Example 2. *Des biens d'amours* by Johannes Martini



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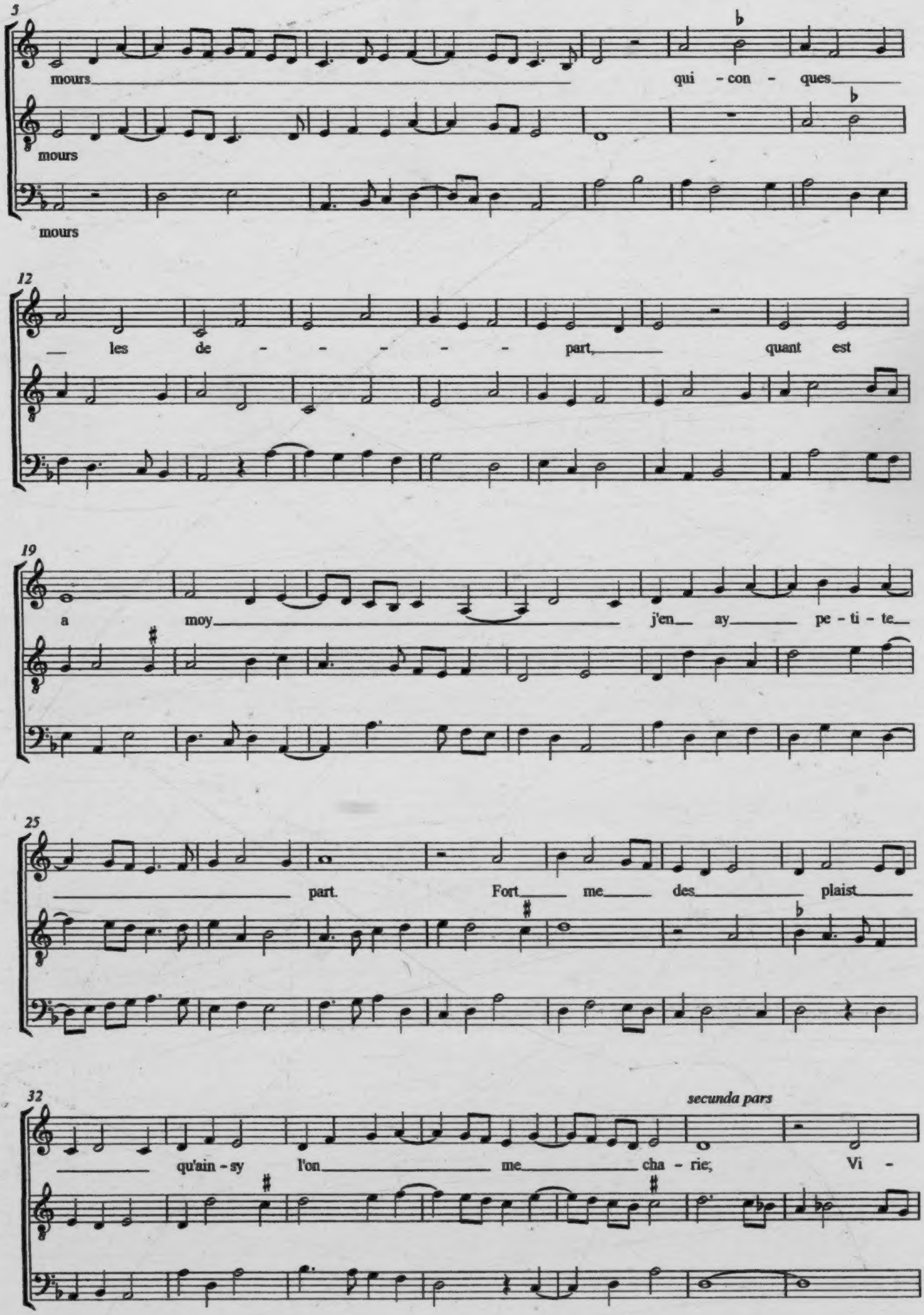
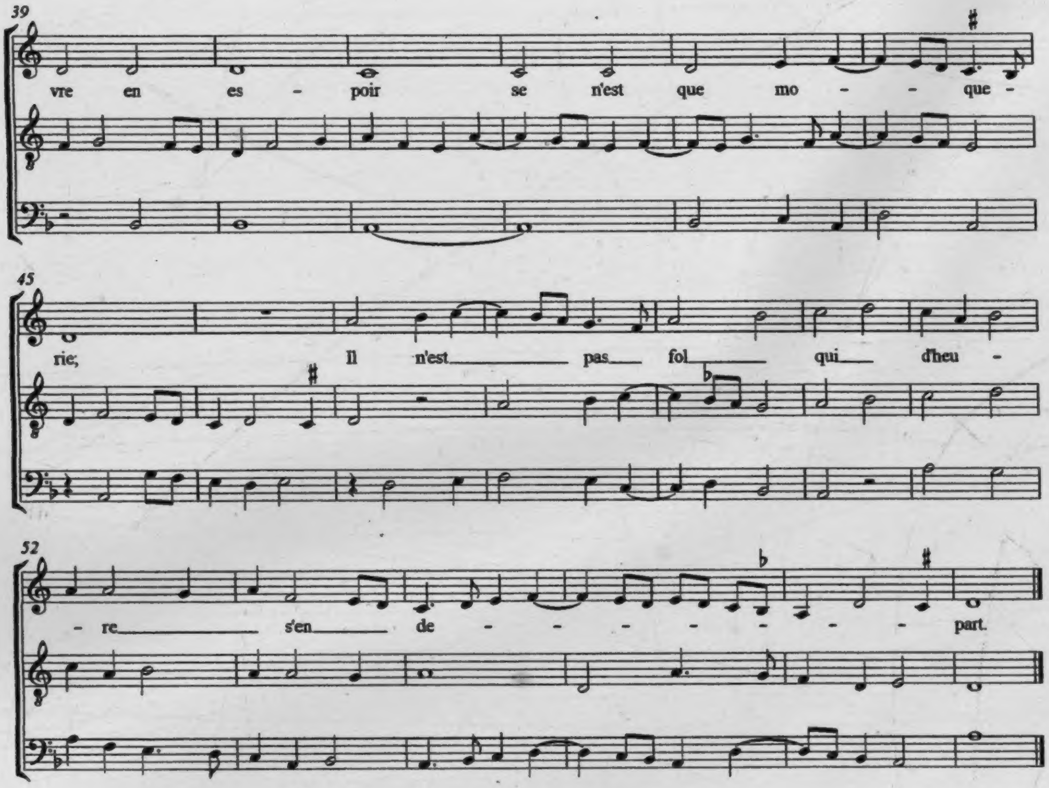
[23] One of Martini's attributed chansons, "J'ay Pris Amours," was so popular it was reproduced in a wood inlay intarsia which adorns the *studiolo* of the Ducal Palace at Urbino.

[24] For a discussion of the ten versions and the attributions see Evans 1975, xiii.


5
mours qui - con - ques
mours
mours
12
les de - - - - - part, quant est
19
a moy j'en ay pe - ti - te
25
part. Fort me des plaist
32
secunda pars
qu'ain - sy l'on me cha - rie; Vi -


39
vre en es - poir se n'est que mo - - que -
45
rie; Il n'est pas fol qui d'heu -
52
- re s'en de - - - - - - - part.

Des biens d'amours quiconques les depart,
Quant est a moy j'en ay petite part.
Fort me desplaist qu'ainsy l'on me charie;
Vivre en espoir se n'est que moquerie;
Il n'est pas fol qui d'heure s'en depart.

He loves well who leaves well,
When it is my turn, I don't delay.
This way, it pleases me if one remembers me fondly.
To live in hope is but a mockery.
He is no fool who knows when to leave.

The piece opens with imitative entries in first the *bassus* then the *cantus*, modestly declaiming the initial poetic phrase of this *rondeau cinquain* and establishing the musical priority of the outer voices. The tenor waits a full four beats before entering in canonic imitation of the soprano at the octave, creating a passage of eloquent movement between the soprano and tenor at parallel sixths on the word "amour," before the tenor releases freely from the canon (m. 6) and the bass takes on the accompanying role, moving in parallel tenths with the soprano (m. 7-8) to bring the first musical phrase to a close (m. 9). The second phrase again begins in imitation, with the initial canonic entry of the bass overlapping the preceding cadence; only this time the soprano and tenor each enter *ad semibrevum* and at the octave. From this point the music assumes a through-composed form until the end of the third line of text, the brief moments of cadence in measures 17 and 27 both leading immediately from the tenor and bass parts into the following sections; a longer cadence marks the end of section A and beginning of the *secunda pars*. Throughout the *prima pars* the three parts intermingle with parallel movement in harmonic thirds and sixths between *tenor* and *superius*, *superius* and *bassus* and *tenor* and *bassus*, with rare exquisite glimpses of all three parts moving homorhythmically, such as on the phrase "j'en ay petite part" (m. 23-26).

In an arresting change of texture, the second part (which begins in measure 37) highlights the tenor line with a series of sequences that sends the melody pirouetting gracefully across the first nine measures (perhaps indicative of the foolish hope —"espoir se n'est que moquerie"— of some lovers) while the soprano and bass lines remain comparatively passive. The final musical and poetic phrase sees one more point of imitative entries (m. 47-48) then a return to sustained passages of fluid half notes and quarter notes juxtaposed against more active movement in an opposing voice. A final burst of parallel embellishment in the soprano and bass (m. 52-53) brings the song to a close. Although no explicit points of word painting are obvious, Martini creates a cohesive artistic beauty within the whole song, expressively delineating the poetic phrases through cadential separation and points of imitative entry, while enhancing the change in thought of the fourth line through a change in texture at the *secunda pars*.

Lack of a complete text in any of the music sources leads Evans to caution against assuming a purely vocal performance, although he admits that "the widespread lack of texts to Martini's music may indicate that the scribes were ignorant of the texts, but that the singers themselves were not" (Evans 1975, xii-xiii). Unlike other secular songs by Martini, in which awkward leaps, wide ranges and truncated phrases suggest a composition more suited to instrumental performance, *Des biens d'amours* is entirely singable, either with three fully texted voice parts, or, as some musicologists and performers have suggested and demonstrated within fourteenth- and fifteenth-century polyphony, with wordless, vocalized tenor and bass lines accompanying the texted soprano.[25] The piece would work equally well as a solo piece with instrumental reduction of the lower two lines for lute or harpsichord—a favourite performance method for Beatrice and Isabella d'Este. The French chansons, with their elegant, engaging melodies and conventional texts concerning courtly love, perfectly suited the ornamental function applied to courtly music as outlined by Castiglione, and are immediately identifiable with the ongoing chivalric conventions of *fin' amors* so readily espoused by the duchesses of northern Italy.

While the texts and music of the French chansons remained a vital link for the northern duchesses to the recent splendour of such renowned courts as those of Burgundy and Savoy, and provided an auditory testament to a living version of *amors cortois*, these proud Italian women were not content to live in a past world of French culture but strove to make their chosen ideology uniquely Italian. For a country of political and regional factionalism, Italy nevertheless engendered a cultural uniqueness which in turn fostered national pride. Humanists and poets looked back to the cohesion and singularity of ancient Rome, reinventing an Italy which, though now divided and frayed, could lay claim to a single cultural heritage. "If national unity escaped the Italians," writes Marcu, "national consciousness was as present here as in other coutnries, and was as persistent as it was pervasive. Their writers used the word *Italy* quite naturally, their political theorists concerned themselves regularly with problems and dangers facing the whole country" (Marcu 1976, 30). A proud line of Italian writers and artists led the European artistic scene, and eventually musicians were added to their virtuous list. Fuelled by humanism and national pride, the acceptance of Italian musicians and a search for higher quality Italian secular music arose within the courts of the northern duchesses.

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[25] This is just one method advocated by Kenneth Kreitner in "Bad news, or not? Thoughts on Renaissance performance practice" (1998, 326-27); the practice is superbly demonstrated on the 1991 Gothic Voices cd, "The Medieval Romantics," directed by Christopher Page (London: Hyperion, CDA66463).

A taste for things Italian is seen in the literary conversations which dominated the leisure hours of the pleasure-seeking courtiers and ladies of the northern courts. French epic and romance heros became Italian under the pen of Boiardo, Ariosto, Tasso, and others. A series of letters between Beatrice d'Este, her sister Isabella, and the gallant courtier Galeazzo de San Severino details an ongoing debate over the competing merits of the Romance heros Orlando and Rinaldo—while San Severino quickly won Beatrice to the defence of Rinaldo, Isabella firmly held out for Orlando, and at last the poet Bellincioni had to be brought in to judge the contest. At other times the Medieval court of love was transformed into a court of scholarly debate, as the ongoing dispute between devotees of Petrarch and Dante at Beatrice d'Este's court demonstrates. In such literary conversations, the poetic conventions of the French Medieval courts of love lived on in their Italian Renaissance descendants, yet the transformation from Medieval court of love to Renaissance academy was a direct result of the impact of humanist thought upon court culture, and upon the women who held court.

In music as well, the northern duchesses were integral in turning contemporary tastes from the French chanson to the Italian *frottola*. At a time when composers and singers of sacred music in Italy were predominantly French and German, the household musicians employed by the northern duchesses were notably Italian. Although Lucrezia and Beatrice both patronized Spanish musicians and Isabella employed some northern vocalists, including two unnamed French singers, Charles Lannoy, Johannes Martini and a Hungarian contralto, the majority of musicians as well as musical courtiers and ladies active in the courts of the northern duchesses were Italian. For example, Italian singer-lutenists Bartolomeo Tromboncino, Marchetto Cara, Giovanni Pietro Fiorentino, Giovanni Angelo Testagrossa, Narcizo de' Mainardi, Ruggiero Cantore, Girolamo da Sestola, Paolo Poccino and Serafino d'Aquilano all served for some time at Isabella's court, along with various Italian chamber instrumentalists —Marco Piffaro, Allesandro dall'Organo, Riciardetto Tamborino, the lira player Picenardi, Bartolomeo dall'Organo, Giovanni

Antonio Tamburino, and keyboardist Alessandro Mantovano. Perhaps the Duchesses' patronage of Italian musicians was due in part to a lack of comparable finances or resources which allowed the Dukes of Ferrara, Milan and Urbino to send agents to France and Germany to find the best singers and composers for their chapels: "for the celebration of divine worship and the daily offices, we are seeking most excellent musicians whom we are looking for everywhere" (letter from Duke Ercole I, Dec. 10, 1471, to the Bishop of Constance; in Lockwood 1972, 117). But more importantly, their patronage of primarily Italian musicians corresponded to their patronage of a native Italian genre of secular music.

Composers of sacred music and chapel singers in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were typicaly French, Flemish or German; these included such famous court *maestri* as Josquin, Isaac, Obrecht, Martini and Brebis, as well as the groups of German boys known as "garzoni todeschi" brought by Duke Ercole to sing in his newly formed court *cappella*. A series of letters from 1491 between Isabella and Johannes Martini, who was searching for good sopranos and contraltos for Isabella's court at Mantua, make a clear distinction between singers trained in sacred music ("da cappella") and those who could sing secular music ("da camera"). In his final letter of August 24, 1491, Martini recommends a contralto who also plays lute well and is a better singer "da camera" than one from Hungary who sings well only in "da cappella" style (in Prizer 1980, 7).[26] Iain Fenlon, in his study of Mantuan music, also notes a connection between the terms *camera* and *cappella* to voice types suited to the performance of secular and sacred genres —"a singer [in a ducal *cappella*] was expected to be able to sing from memory, sight-read, and improvise embellishments, and certain voice types were expected to have a *cappella* voice and a *camera* voice," while a secular court musician required not only a pleasing singing voice, but also proficiency on stringed instruments in order to perform the many accompanied songs of the secular genres (Fenlon 1980, 111). There was clearly a demarcation between the sacred *cappella* vocal style perfected by *oltremonte* singers, and secular chamber singing for which the northern duchesses turned primarily to Italian singers.

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[26] In the records of the Milanese ducal choir, the terms *da camera* and *da cappella* are not so clearly defined, but variously mean a delineation between travelling and resident court choirs, a liturgical-ceremonial function and singers of the daily office, or membership in two ducal music rooms—the chapel and the *camera*. The few surviving references to secular music of fifteenth-century Milan imply performance by those listed on the payrolls either as instrumentalists (ie. lutenist-singers) or courtiers (see Merkley and Merkley 1999).

In the years leading up to the sixteenth century, Italian secular vocalists, who were usually also string players and composers (although their compositions were oral, not written), had become popular at court and on the street. The improvised songs of such great Italian singer-lutenists as Giustiniani, Pietrobono and Serafino was a direct antecedent to the genres patronized and performed by the northern duchesses in their intellectual court circles. Thus for the type of music they sang and listened to in their northern courts, Isabella and Lucrezia naturally turned to Italian musicians, both for the musical setting of Italian poetry after the style of Pietrobono, and for the string-accompanied performance of secular music in the "da camera" vocal style. Einstein recognizes Isabella d'Este as "the first and greatest fosterer of a *national* art practice" (Einstein 1949, I:39). Certainly the patronage of Italian secular music and musicians by the northern duchesses contributed to the development of Italian music, and most importantly, to the emergence of the Italian *frottola*.

Under the patronage of the northern duchesses, a new Italian song form flourished at the north Italian courts. The *frottola*, a generic term which encompasses many different Italian verse forms and compositional types, emerged out of the unwritten semi-improvised vocal tradition around 1470. Although its simple three-voiced homophonic texture and early texts recall the rustic *villotta* or *villanella* (from the Latin *villlanus*, meaning "peasant"), the *frottola* quickly developed into one of the most elegant and popular art forms among the aristocracy and cultivated middle class, and by the early 1490s many *frottole* were being collected and written down.[27] Until about 1490, a three-voiced form prevailed, but in later works four voices became more popular, and many originally three-part songs were reworked with an added *altus* voice for publication. By the time Petrucci began his series of printed books of *frottole* in 1510, the genre included the Italian fixed poetic forms, the most popular being the *barzelletta* (the *frottola* proper), *strambotto*, *oda*, *capitolo* and *canzone*, as well as others.[28] Although Francesca Baratella used the word in the sixteenth century as a general derogatory connotation of any poem "in the vulgar tongue" which "signify the words of rustics and of other persons who have no perfect maxims" (in Prizer 1980, 70), the most famous poets of Beatrice's court, including Vincenzo Calmeta, Benedetto da Cingoli, Niccolò da Correggio, Gaspare Visconti (1461-1499), Antonio Tebaldeo, Serafino Aquilano (1466-1500) and Gareotto del Carretto (c1470-1531), all wrote *frottole*, perhaps for Beatrice to sing. Many of these northern poets are represented in Petrucci's ten books of *frottole* printed between 1504-1514, the most comprehensive repository of the *frottola* repertoire.[29]

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[27] Don Harrán gives the dates of the *frottola*'s popularity as 1470-1530 (Harrán 2001, 868), but there is evidence of its endurance in performance practice until the 1550s (see chapter four, "The Gendered Lute Song").

The Milanese manuscript Trivulziana, Milan (MS 55) contains several *strambotti* by the poet-composers of Beatrice's court, including Aquilano and Calmeta, which could easily have been sung by Beatrice and her courtiers. The *strambotto Del mio amar grande* by Serafino Aquilano, for instance, is typical of early three-part songs of the type that Beatrice, Galeazzo and Dioda may have sung on their way to Cussago.[30] Its simple three-part texture is reminiscent of the rustic *villotta*, while its text speaks eloquently of the conventional pain and pleasure of courtly love.

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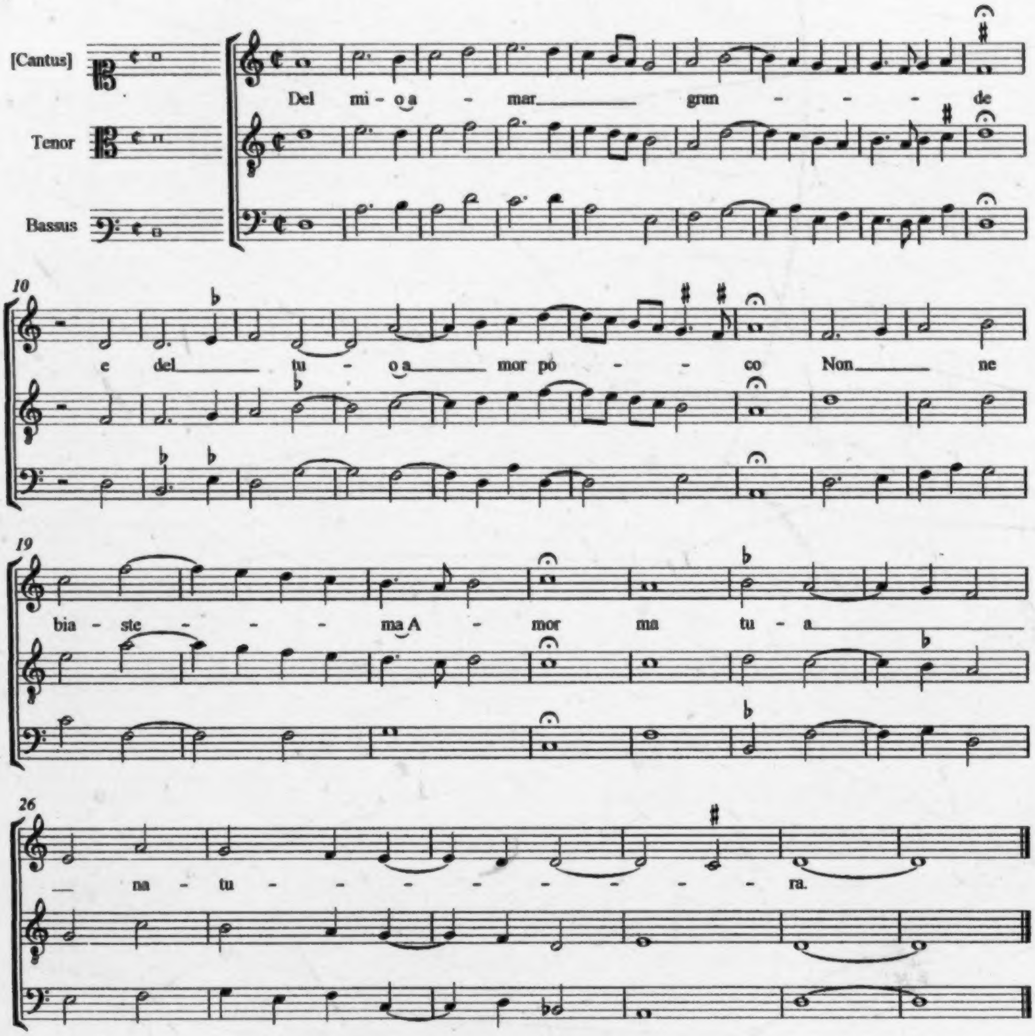
[28] Einstein makes a distinction between "frottole properly speaking—i.e., compositions which are really small ballate . . . of *courtois* lyric poetry—and compositons of different form and different content: *ottava* stanzas (*strambotti*), odes, *canzoni*, *terze rime*, sonnets, melodies for Latin meters, quodlibets, *villotte*, etc. etc." (Einstein 1949, I:1, 60). For detailed examinations of the *frottola*, see: Haar 1967, 51-87; Einstein 1949, I:34-115; Rubsamen 1943; Prizer 1980; Jeppesen 1968-70.

[29] Although Petrucci's series represents the largest collection of *frottole*, fifteen other *frottola* prints appeared from 1510-1531 (by Petrucci, Antico, Sambonetto, Caneto, Dorico and an unknown printer-publisher), as well as a number of manuscript sources. See Harrán 2001, 869.

[30] See chapter two for this story of aristocratic music-making during a typical pastoral outing.

Example 3. *Del mio amar grande* by Serafino Aquilano


[Cantus]
Tenor
Bassus
10
19
26
Del mi - o a - mar gran - - - de
e del tu - o a mor po - - - co Non ne
bia - ste - - - - ma A - mor ma tu - a
na - tu - - - - - - - - ra.

Del mio amar grande e del tuo amor poco
Non ne biastema Amor ma tua natura.
Veduto ho fructi in un sol tempo e loco
Un dolce, e l'altro mai non se matura;
Visto ho la cera e 'l fango a un sol foco,
L'un[a] se liquefa, e l'altro s'indura.
Cussi cocendo nui d'un foco Amore,
Tu te indurissi, e me disfaze el core.

For my great pain and your little love,
Do not blame Love but your nature.
I have seen in a single time and place

One sweet fruit, and another that will never ripen;
I have seen wax and mud in the same fire,
One turns to liquid, the other to stone.
In this way we answer the flames of Love,
You harden, while my heart melts.

Del mio amar grande is a conventional *strambotto* of the type popular from early improvised tradition until c.1505.[31] The poem comprises one strophe containing eight lines of alternating thirteen and twelve syllables, with a rhyme scheme of ABABABCC; the lines are further divided by a caesura (which occurs as a natural pause in the scansion) into six plus seven, and six plus six syllables. Although the length of lines is less conventional (endosyllabic lines being the most popular), the rhyme scheme is typical of the *strambotto toscano,* a type quite popular in the northern courts. According to a common strophic formula, the anonymous musical setting (which is likely by Serafino himself) provides music for only the first couplet of the text, requiring the same melody to be repeated three times in order to encompass the entire poem. The eloquent text is gracefully expressed in a fairly melismatic melody which observes the poetic caesurae with paused cadences.

Typical especially of the three-part form popular until about 1490, the composition is in duple metre (*tempus imperfectum cum prolatio minor*, ¢), displays homorhythmic texture (apart from a few additional moving notes in the upper two parts), and possesses triadic harmony. While the cantus carries a fluid melody which the tenor closely parallels, the two lines moving almost entirely in parallel sixths, the bass line supports the composition, providing what would later be called the "root" of each harmony. The comfortable tessitura, uncomplicated harmony, and smooth voice-leading all indicate a very singable piece of polyphony for an average soprano, mezzo or tenor, and bass, with the only exception occurring in the extended range of the tenor line, which moves from A^3

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[31] A facsimile is published in Rubsamen 1943, frontispiece; modern editions can be found in Bianconi and Rossi, *Le Rime di Serafino Aquilano in Musica* (1999) 195-96 and Jeppesen 1968-70, vol. 3, 295-296.

to D in the scope of the last twelve measures.[32]

Although many *frottole* are suitable for *a cappella* singing (illustrating this, the frontispiece of Andrea Antico's 1510 collection of *frottole*, *Canzoni nove*, shows four male singers reading from a choirbook *a cappella*), they were also performed as solos to lute or viol accompaniment, what Castiglione referred to as "cantare alla viola" (Castiglione 1959, 105). Solo performance with instrumental accompaniment was typical of the older, improvised "unwritten tradition" of singing poetry to improvised melodies, of which Nino Pirrotta claims the *frottola* is the direct outgrowth (Pirrotta 1966). The recitative-like declamation of poetry to an instrumental melodic accompaniment was a wide-spread fifteenth-century practice, raised to popular heights by such renowned *improvisatore* as Leonardo Giustiniani (c.1383-1446), who sang his own poetry to the accompaniment of a *lira da braccio*, singer-lutenist Pietrobono (1470-1498), who was so highly esteemed at Borso d'Este's court that a number of portrait medals were struck in his honour, and even noblemen like Lorenzo de' Medici (1448-1492), "whose dabbling in love-poetry was more than a casual pastime" (Harrán 2001, 868). One of the most important poet-musicians, Serafino Aquilano, was particularly renowned for his incomparable skill at improvising exquisite melodies and accompanying himself on the lute; his fame as "il poeta, cantore e suonatore di liuto" was celebrated across Italy by more than fifteen fellow poets (Bianconi and Rossi 1999, 5).

The popularity of improvised singing or *recitare* lasted into the sixteenth century, for as late as 1516 Castiglione declared "it is singing recitative with the viola that seems to me most delightful, as this gives to the words a wonderful charm and effectiveness" (Castiglione 1959, 105). Nevertheless, to aid the amateur performer who may not have been so skilled, *frottole* began to be written down with more frequency from the 1490s.

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[32] Interestingly, a setting by Marchetto Cara of the same poem (with very slight textual alterations) found in a manuscript of 1526, comprises a four-part syllabic setting which is much more contrapuntal (*Canzoni, frottole et capitoli. Da diversi eccellentissimi musici composti nuovamente stampati et correcti. Libro primo. De la Croce*, Roma, Giovanni Giacomo Pasoto e Valerio Dorico a spese di Giacomo Giunti IV.1526. c. 14*r*. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Muskksammlung S.A.78.C.30).

Yet Petrucci's publications contain only four-part songs, indicating their performance in vocal or instrumental quartets and requiring lutenist-singers to reduce the alto, tenor and bass into a two-voiced instrumental accompaniment. Whether performed as vocal polyphony or by a solo voice accompanied on the lute, the northern duchesses and their courts favoured the intimate nature of the *frottola* and it was here that the genre flourished. The *frottola* is particularly associated with Mantua and Ferrara; the two most prominent frottolists, Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Marchetto Cara, were both at some time in the service of Isabella d'Este, and Lucrezia Borgia employed at least three composers of *frottole*: Niccolò da Padova whom she had brought from Rome, Dionisio da Mantova called 'Papino,' and Bartolomeo Tromboncino who transferred his allegiance from Isabella to Lucrezia sometime after 1502. Isabella along with Lucrezia Borgia at Ferrara have rightly been credited with playing "a crucial role in the development of the frottola" (Prizer 1985, 30).

Although Serafino's text "Del mio amar grande e del tuo amor poco" speaks of courtly love, many *frottole* had folk-inspired lyrics. As Donna Cardamone points out, "country life, the speech, customs, and attitudes of peasants, entered the realm of the courtly or educated urban society on a consistent basis in the fifteenth century. The rural tradition, in its rough and gentle moods, was imitated and even caricatured in various literary forms: pseudo-rustic masquerades, eclogues, farces, narratives, and numerous types of poetry, many of which included (or were set to) music" (Cardamone 1990, I:33). This *poesia rusticana* penetrated the *frottola* repertory particularly in the lighter *barzelletta*, *canzonetta* and *villotta*, all of which have connections to popular folk-song and assume the form of a strophic stanza plus refrain. Cardamone also finds peasant themes in the *strambotto* which (following Monti and Einstein) she cites as a direct antecedent of the later three-part *canzone villanesca*. Although Einstein cites "the relationship of the frottola to folk-song" as further proof of its inferior character, he nevertheless makes the important observation that "to all the 'polyphonic' pieces in the *frottola* prints and MSS, or, to put it in technical terms, to all those pieces in which all the voices have words, there clings a certain popular flavor and parodistic intention" (Einstein

1949, I:84-85). Such a characteristic is consistent with a performance practice where the *frottola* as solo song with lute accompaniment was the more sophisticated courtly form, while polyphonic singing connoted pastoral, rural or working-class associations, even when composed by and for the aristocracy.

Rustic themes deluge the poetry even of noble poets, such as in the delightful *strambotto* in praise of the beautiful shepherdess Nencia, attributed to Lorenzo de' Medici, the Magnificent:

> Ardo d'amore, e conviemme cantare
> per una dama che me strugge el cuore;
> ch'ogni otta ch'i' la sento ricordare,
> el cor me brilla e par ch'egli esca fuore.
> Ella non truova de bellezze pare,
> cogle occhi gitta fiaccole d'amore.
> I'sono stato in città e'n castella,
> e mai ne vidi ignuna tanto bella.
> (de' Medici 1992, 89)

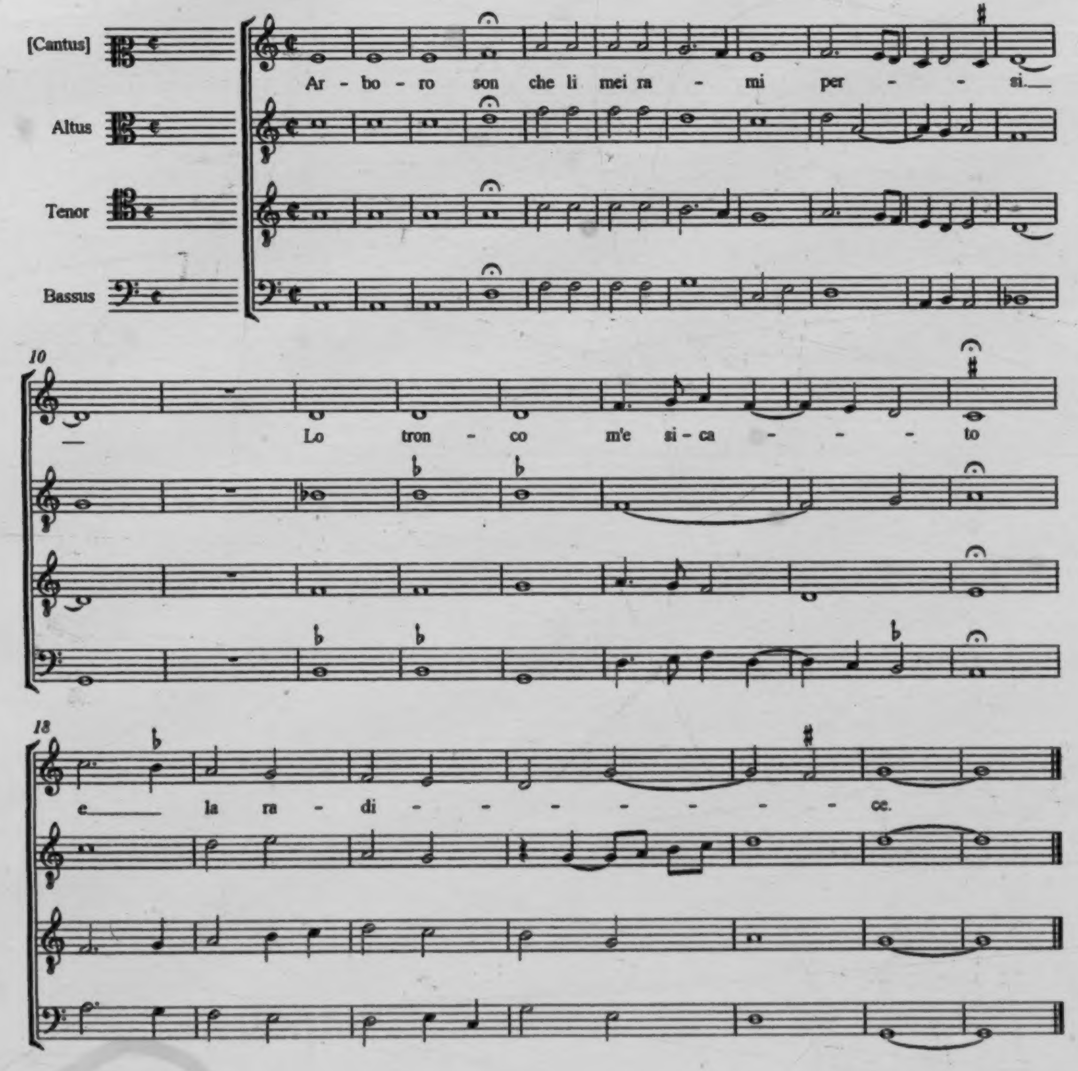
> I burn with love and feel compelled to sing
> About a lady who consumes my heart.
> Each time I hear her name my heart's aflutter,
> Whereupon I think that it may well desert
> Me utterly. In grace she has no peer,
> And from her eyes the flames of passion dart.
> I've been to town, I've also seen the city
> And yet I never saw a girl so pretty.
> (de' Medici 1991, 184)

The existence of four significantly different versions of *La Nencia da Barberino* (ranging from twelve to fifty-one stanzas) attests to the poem's enduring popularity, and to the common delight found in a parody of the pastoral lament, here set in the simple dialect of the Tuscan countryside. In fact the humourous *Nencia* is attributed with inspiring a new poetic genre — " 'versi nenciali' that was much in vogue in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries" (Thiem; in Medici 1991, 188). The stanza chosen by Jean Japart for his four-part setting, printed in Petrucci's *Odhecaton*, is the seventeenth of the most commonly reprinted twenty stanza Volpi version. By this time Lorenzo's speaker, the herder Vallera, has abandoned his attempt at the conventional diction of courtly love which began the poem, and the poem devolves into an exuberant expression of his devotion mixed with descriptions of his daily life, which captures the rustic analogies of love in dialect expressions which the Florentine Lorenzo would have heard in the surrounding Tuscan countryside.

> Nenciozza mia, i'vo' sabato andare
> sin a Firenze a vender duo somelle
> de schegge, ch'i' me puosi ier a tagghiare,
> mentre ch'i' ero a pascer le vitelle.
> Procura ben quel ch'i' posso recare,
> se tu vuo' ch'io te omperi cavelle:
> o liscio o biacca into 'n cartoccino
> o de squilletti o d'agora un quattrino.
> (de' Medici 1992, 92)
>
> My Nencia, sweet, I plan to go to Florence
> To sell two loads of kindling Saturday,
> Kindling that I began to chop and split
> While pasturing my heifers yesterday.
> Just think of what you want that I can buy,
> Some pretty bauble, anything you say:
> Perhaps a sack of rouge, or facial cream,
> Or needles, or some pins to tack a seam.
> (de' Medici 1991, 186)

Even when written in a more courtly style, many poetic settings favoured by Italian noblewomen reflect the simple pleasures of the outdoors, or used the conventional association of nature with love. An interesting example is found in a *strambotto* by Isabella d'Este herself. In a letter of 1494, Antonio Tebaldeo praises the poem, saying, "I have seen the *strambotto* composed by Your Ladyship on the plants stripped of their leaves, and I like it very much" ("Ho visto il strambotto, quale ha composto la s. v. parlando ad le piante, che hanno perse le foglie: mi è piaciuto asai"; in Gallico 1963, 109). Although Einstein identified the work as *Son quel troncho senza foglie*, a *frottola* (which is not metrically a *strambotto*) published anonymously in Petrucci's second book of *frottole* (Einstein 1949, I:1, 44), Claudio Gallico later established that the poem mentioned by Tebaldeo is more likely *Arboro son, che li mei rami persi* (Gallico 1963). "One of the earliest-known representatives of the frottola," the text of *Arboro Son* is preserved along with an anonymous musical setting in a Paduan manuscript of 1495 which William Prizer calls "perhaps the earliest extant frottola manuscript" (Prizer 1989, 146 & 145). In the tradition of the troubadours, the poem delicately contrasts the pain of unrequited courtly love with the harsher elements of nature:

Example 4. *Arboro son che li mei rami persi*, attr. Isabella d'Este


[Cantus]
Altus
Tenor
Bassus
Ar - bo - ro son che li mei ra - mi per - - si.
10
Lo tron - co m'e si - ca - - - to
18
e la ra - di - - - - - - - ce.

Arboro son, che li mei rami persi,
Lo tro[nco] m'è sicato e la radice,
Le foglie quasa da venti diversi,
Li frutti ho perso, misero infelice!
Me legno taglia la gente diversi.
Misero me, che mal al mondo fece?
Fortuna sotto rota m'ha somersi:
O tristo a chi fortuna contradice.
(in Gallico 1963, 10)[33]

I am like the tree that has lost its branches,
The trunk and the roots dried out,
The leaves blown by diverse winds,
The fruit lost, o pitiful unhappy tree!
My wood has been cut by many different people
Poor me, what evil have I done to the world?
Fortune has submersed me under her wheel:
O sorrow, for me whom Fortune opposes.

A definite shift in poetic taste within the development of the Italian *frottola* can also be attributed to the influence of Lucrezia Borgia and Isabella d'Este. A growing renewal of interest in Petrarch was sweeping Italy in the early sixteenth century, and not only the humanist scholars but the duchesses and their courts took up the literary trend. Vincenzo Calmeta dedicated an elaborate commentary on Petrarch's *canzoni* to Isabella d'Este, and Lucrezia Borgia owned a copy of Petrarch's *canzoniere*, which she had brought in her personal library from Rome to Ferrara. Her interest in Petrarchan poetry was fueled by her friendship with the leading contemporary Petrarchists, including Ercole Strozzi, Antonio Tebaldeo and Pietro Bembo, who dedicated his *Asolani* —considerations on, and poems about, love— to Lucrezia, with whom he carried on an ardent but platonic love affair from 1502-1505.

Lucrezia's interest in Petrarch and his followers led her to seek musical settings of Italian poetry, and greatly impacted Tromboncino's choice of texts—whether through direct commissions or personal influence. Settings of texts by Petrarch, along with elaborations of Ovid and Horace written for the Ferrarese Duchess, are published in

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[33] Text and music in Gallico 1963, 110-111.

Antico's second and third books of *frottole* of 1513. While her husband was importing French singers and songs for his ducal *cappella*, Lucrezia, along with her ladies and courtiers, sang the works of classic and popular Italian poets to melodies by current native Italian musicians. The poetry of Petrarch and his new imitators was a perfect choice for the northern duchesses, for the Tuscan poet not only exemplified the great Italian humanist spirit, but was a direct heir of the poetic conventions of *fin' amours* which still graced the courts of Europe.

Lucrezia was anticipated in this intent by her rival Isabella d'Este, for Tromboncino's settings of Petrarch, as well as "elaborations of higher quality verse" (Prizer 1985, 21), begin during the period of his employment at the court of Mantua. Prizer comments that "at Mantua, Isabella seems to have turned her attention more toward settings of Italian texts, the settings that were to fascinate her so greatly and that were to make music at Mantua so important in the rebirth of Italian vocal music" (Prizer 1980, 29). Typical of Isabella's concern with the poetry being sung at her court, a letter of August 20, 1504, to poet and courtier Niccolò da Corregio, reveals a detailed request specifically for fine Italian Petrarchan poetry intended to be set to music and sung.

> Because we want to have music composed to a *canzone* of Petrarch, we ask you to choose one that you like and to write the beginning of it, and also to send me one or two of yours that please you most, remembering also the *capitolo* and sonnets that you promised us. (Niccolò da Corregio to Isabella d'Este, August 23, 1504; in Prizer 1980, 58).

For Isabella, Tromboncino set texts by Petrarch, Veronica Gambara, Galeotto del Carretto, Serafino Aquilano and Vincenzo Calmeta, as well as other classical and Renaissance poets. When Tromboncino left Mantua and Marchetto Cara became Isabella's chief composer, she continued her pursuit of high-quality Italian poetry. She particularly encouraged musical settings of Petrarch, and regularly solicited offerings from contemporary Italian poets.

William Prizer comments on Lucrezia and Isabella, saying that both women "contributed profoundly to the rise of native Italian music and to its development" (Prizer 1985, 30). Their patronage of Italian poets and composers, contrary to the continued support of *oltremonte* musicians by the male members of the Este and Gonzaga families, was undeniably important to the development of Italian secular vocal music, which would attain unprecedented popularity during the sixteenth century. Yet this patronage was influenced by social conventions which, while honouring the lady of the court as a cultural muse and mistress, relegated her sphere of musical performance to the confines of the court *famiglia*. Thus, by virtue of their gender and the societal norms which influenced the construction of a social identity, these women of rank and influence focused their attention on music to be performed among friends in intimate chambers and for pleasurable entertainment, establishing Italian secular vocal music in the early sixteenth century as one of the most important and popular musics in Europe.

Chapter Four

Hearing the Female Voice: Some thoughts on Performance, Spectatorship and Pleasure

In a letter to the Florentine court of June 26, 1581, Ambassador Orazio Urbani wrote of the daily musical performances of Duke Alfonso II of Ferrara's new *concerto delle donne*, saying, "the Duke is so inclined to and absorbed in this thing that he appears to have placed there not only all his delight but also the sum total of his attention. One can give no greater pleasure to the Duke than by appreciating and praising his ladies, who are constantly studying new inventions" (in Newcomb 1980, 97). With women's ensembles being established in Ferrara, Mantua, Rome and Florence, and new female *virtuose* garnering the praise of a nation, the listening audience of sixteenth-century Italy was clearly fascinated with the female singing voice. In exploring this fascination and the increase in number and popularity of female singers, this chapter will begin by examining cultural mores which pushed women towards performance as the primary outlet for musical energies (composition, publishing and even teaching being more difficult for women to engage in). The widespread acceptance of female singers then and now, however, points to a greater underlying element of pleasure found in hearing the female voice, one which however influenced by is not limited to Renaissance societal conventions; applying a modern feminist semiotic model will illuminate the function of pleasure in hearing a gendered vocal performance. Finally an examination of the descriptive imagery used in eyewitness accounts and chronicles of female performance will inform us about contemporary gender ideologies which infused the perception of and response to the female singing voice and female singers.

The Gendered Division of Vocal Performance and Composition

Throughout the century, in descriptions of early court performances in the northern duchies, of the singing of intellectual courtesans in Venetian and Roman salons, or of the debut of virtuoso soloists upon the stage, chroniclers and eyewitnesses outdo each other in describing the exquisite vocal beauty of female singers, peppering their correspondence with adjectives like 'angelic,' 'divine,' 'most beautiful,' 'sweet and sonorous,' 'most wonderful' and 'admired by all'. By the end of the century, the craze for female singers had risen to its height: visiting courtiers waited impatiently to hear the *musica secreta* of women's vocal ensembles at Ferrara, Mantua and Florence; Dukes and Princes awarded incredible salaries to these ladies-in-waiting who also sang;[1] composers and publishers wrote music for and dedicated anthologies to them; nobles and bourgeoisie alike flocked to hear the secular concerts given by nuns in Milan and Ferrara; while people of all classes delighted to hear the famed *commedia* actresses Isabella Andreini, Vittoria Piissimi, Vincenza Armani or Virginia Ramponi pick up a lute or harp to accompany their beautiful singing in the midst of a scene, or perform a virtuosic role in an *intermedi* or *ballo*. Female singers performed throughout the secular musical world, were admitted to the famed Italian intellectual academies or amateur *ridotti* (either as guests or as full members), revered at courts (including the courts of cardinals and bishops) and lauded on the stage.

The reason for this unprecedented appreciation of women's vocal performance is in part suggested by the cultural mores which have historically dictated the acceptability of women singers while restricting the role of women instrumentalists and composers. In the history of the arts, vocal performance seems to be the one area in which individual women are recognized as often and as freely as men. Although the Middle Ages and Renaissance are sometimes considered the age of 'Anonymous', the names of female and male musicians have been recorded along with actual songs since the earliest European documents concerning music, beginning with the *vitas* of troubadours and trouvères —biographies as much concerned with the love affairs of these Medieval poet-musicians as their singing voices, instrumental skill and compositional output. However, a significant increase in the recording of musicians' names, particularly the names of women, does occur in the early Renaissance. With the re-invention of classical humanist ideals, the individual artist became a necessary and important figure in society; but these same humanist tenets also caused a divergence in the reputation of a musician as a composer or performer, which coincided with a differentiation of musical roles based on class and gender. While both men and women composed and sang, it is the women who are remembered for the physical and aural beauty of their performance, while the men are aligned with the more noble, intellectual pursuit of composition.

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[1] The salaries granted to female court singers, as well as their positions at court, may indicate how valued their singing was: Tarquinia Molza and Laura Peperara both received 300 *scudi* per year and rooms in the ducal palace, while Peperara was also awarded a dowry worth 10,000 *scudi* and annual stipends of 300 *scudi* per year for both her husband and mother. These figures are rendered even more significant when compared with the 125 and 135 *scudi* per year earned by Fiorino and Luzzaschi. Interestingly, the two positions (composer and *maestro di cappella*) revered and investigated by traditional musicologists, were not as valued in their day as the female singers whom history has forgotten. The fame of some singers was such that they could command their own terms; if an anonymous letter writer at Milan is to be believed, Adriana Basile was paid 2000 *scudi* in 1611 for her musical services to Duke Gonzaga; while Francesca Caccini held an annual retainer of 240 *scudi* per year, the highest paid Florentine court member, next only to the Duke's secretary.

This gendered division has been intensified by the academic study of music history which, since the nineteenth century, has lionized the (male) composer and focussed its attention primarily on compositional style. Although Renaissance women did compose, we know of many more male composers and certainly have a great deal more extant compositions by Renaissance men; only recently has music scholarship begun to acknowledge and seek out the histories of women composers in early music. Still, those few women who composed music mainly for their own use, like Settimia and Francesca Caccini, and Vittoria Archilei were known in their own time and indeed are remembered mainly as singers. Similarly, while male singers were certainly abundant, particularly in church *cappellas* where women were virtually denied a place, music history has cast its own shadow over history, and male musicians such as Marchetto Cara and Guilio Caccini who, in their own time, were renowned as virtuoso singers and lutenists, are now known primarily as composers. We therefore know of at least as many, if not more, famous individual women singers than men from Renaissance Italy.[2] Among the identified singers at the court of Ferrara in the 1580s, for instance, are the names of six well-known women —Isabella and Lucrezia Bendidio, Tarquinia Molza, Livia d'Arco, Anna Guarini and the favoured Laura Peverara— but that of only three men —Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, Ippolito Fiorino and Luzzasco Luzzaschi, the latter two of which were actually the *maestro di cappella* and court composer. Presumably other anonymous male chamber singers from the Duke's *cappella di musica* joined the private ensemble from time to time as needed, but no other names or specific references to male singers are recorded in the documents which refer to the Duke's highly popular *musica secreta* in which the women performed.

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[2] The case of instrumentalists is not quite so clear cut. While the rise of the individual virtuoso instrumentalist did not reach its height until the next century, we know of male and female

Perhaps one important reason for this separation of vocal performance and composition along gendered lines is the greater status assigned to composition by humanist intellectuals. Classical humanism, "the most characteristic and pervasive intellectual current" of the Italian Renaissance (Palisca 1985, 6) emphasized those elements which linked music to the pursuit of ancient learning and made it worthy of scholarly attention. The theory of counterpoint, of modes, of aesthetics, the revival of rhetoric and music's link to poetry, the powerful communication of the affections—these discussions identified music in its intellectual guise of composition with other elevated humanist disciplines such as rhetoric, mathematics and philosophy. The thinking of Italian humanists, philosophers, musical theorists, composers and musicians "was intertwined at many points with the general intellectual strands that constituted the very core of the Renaissance spirit" (Palisca 1985, 22). It is in this context that male musicians, seeking recognition among the most powerful and influential of Italy's humanist circles, strove to be lauded and remembered predominantly as composers and theorists, although they might be teacher, performer, director and impresario as well. Since women were largely unrecognized as intellectuals in humanist domains, the element of music most aligned to

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instrumentalists who functioned in sixteenth-century society, some individuals achieving notoriety, such as the Pellizzari sisters, renowned both as child prodigies and adults for their performance on the cornetto and trombone. More often an entire ensemble would be praised without a soloist or individual performer being singled out, as in the fame accorded to the monastic women's orchestra at the convent of San Vito, Ferrara.

their idealized role in society —performance— constituted the sphere which could bring them most recognition.

A performing woman embodied those feminine virtues most idolized in Renaissance society—being decorative, beautiful to behold and to listen to, entertaining and facilitating recreational enjoyment, and speaking directly to the emotions while steering clear of intellectual argument, great rhetoric, philosophical reasoning, or political involvement. A female performer also provided a vessel for the display of male composorial skill: in the dedication to his *First Book of Madrigals à 5*, Paolo Virchi, court organist at Ferrara, cites the chamber singers of Ferrara as the source of his inspiration and reputation:

> I do not attribute [the success of my madrigals] so much to my own artifice as to the sweetness of the voices of the Illustrious Ladies who sing them, who, with a marvelous new approach (*dispositione*) and in a new way—not fully understood—of diminutions and ornamentation, easily increase the pleasure of my music, so that I am not equal to their reputation for such excellence. (in Riley 1985, 482)

Just as a beautiful and courteous wife might grace a Prince's court, a skilled female singer could bring recognition to the songs of composers like Willaert, Luzzaschi, and Monteverdi.

The patriarchal ideology which discouraged women from participating in the intellectual humanist debate also reduced their opportunity to learn composition and publish their songs. The problem for women was not solely due to education; while learning opportunities like those offered by a church or court *cappella* were normally prohibited to girls, a family financially able and ideologically open to educating their daughters could find private tutors or place the girl in a convent school to learn music as well as other liberal arts.[3] A musical education for both female and male students would usually include contrapuntal and melodic improvisation and music theory —the basic skills of beginning composition— along with singing and instrumental performance (for girls, most often on the lute, harp, viola or keyboards). Jane Bowers lists several young women whose fathers engaged a "*Maestro di contraponto*" as well as instrumental and voice teachers for their daughters (Bowers 1987, 129-133).[4] However, the availability of music education did not necessarily lead to the existence of professional directorial musical posts available to women. Wives and daughters were still subject to domestic confinement, and their reduced access to necessary finances further discouraged their active participation in public business dealings like contracting a publisher. Even when women were encouraged by a strong patron or professional musical family, these obstacles seemed to push women musicians toward performance and away from publication, especially when weighed against the increased opportunities of singing careers for women in court and on stage from the 1570s on, and the cultivation of women's musical performance in academies and convents.[5] Thus while women and men may have both composed and sang, male musicians were acknowledged and respected as published composers, and described as skilled singers and instrumentalists on the side, while conversely, notable female singers were only occasionally distinguished as performing their own compositions, which unfortunately remained largely unprinted and unpublished. It seems then, that for a Renaissance woman to be recognized as a musician she needed to put on a display as a performer, and for the highest recognition, she must be able to sing. Indeed, as ambassador Urbani observed, in order to make an impression at Duke Alfonso's court, "one needs to know how to sing" (in Newcomb 1987, 96).

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[3] An exception might be found in the case of a *maestro di cappella* who allowed his daughters to attend his own school, as did Giulio Caccini with Settimia and Francesca.

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[4] The key was the attitude of the girl's family, for many families actively discouraged their daughters from learning music at all. Pietro Bembo, though advocating music as a suitable accomplishment for ladies and never hesitating to praise his patron Isabella d'Este's performances, denied his own daughter a musical education. He outlines his disapproval in a letter presumably written in response to her request for musical tuition or discovered musical inclinations:

> Playing music is for a woman a vain and frivolous thing. And I would wish you to be the most serious and chaste woman alive. Beyond this, if you do not play well your playing will give you little pleasure and not a little embarrassment. And you will not be able to play well unless you spend ten or twelve years in this pursuit without thinking of anything else. What this would mean to you you can imagine yourself without my saying more. Therefore set aside thoughts of this frivolity and work to be humble and good and wise and obedient. Don't let yourself be carried away by these desires, indeed resist them with a strong will. (In Strunk 1998, 333)

[5] Jane Bowers lists 65 extant compositions by women composers between 1566 and 1700, yet remarks that "While the number of women who composed was revolutionary in one sense, it was tiny when compared with the number of men who composed, and most women wrote fewer compositions and in a more limited number of musical genres than men. The social milieu in which women composers emerged also differed markedly from that which produced men composers" (Bowers 1987, 117). On increased opportunity for the professional woman singer see Bowers 1987, 121-24 and Newcomb 1987. See also my discussion of 'professionalism' in chapter seven.

Pleasure in the Female Singing Voice — a Psychoanalytical/semiotic Model

The rise of more prominent women singers due to women's lack of compositional opportunity does not in itself explain Duke Alfonso's complete absorption with the singing ladies of Ferrara. Rather, women's increased opportunities for performance was at once fuel for and a symptom of the innate pleasure found in listening to the female voice. Ambassador Urbani recognized this as he explained, the Duke has "placed there . . . all his delight" and that nothing could give "greater pleasure to the Duke" than the appreciation of his singers. Many other eyewitnesses speak of the "delight," "wonder," "amazement" and "pleasure" encountered upon hearing female singers in various contexts.[6] Such expressions of pleasure are not unique to Renaissance encounters with the female voice, but exist throughout the history of music reception, and indeed, in our own time. Since the early modern era women singers have remained immensely popular and gained great distinction as virtuoso performers. In current classical vocal music, while the Three Tenors have broken the classical-pop barrier, the great prima donnas of the twentieth century—Callas, Caballé, Melba, Malibran, Sutherland, Schwarzkopf— along with their later counterparts —Te Kanawa, Battle, Norman, von Stade, Baker, Fleming, Upshaw (as well as sopranos like Sarah Brightman and Charlotte Church who sit on the classical/pop boundary) among many others— have dominated the vocal stage. Given the positive reception of women singers since the Renaissance and in our own time, there may be some transhistorical factor in the experience of pleasure upon hearing the female singing voice that can help us understand this intriguing phenomenon of the sixteenth century.

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[6] Several contemporary commentators use such descriptors: Trissino claims that anyone who heard Isabella d'Este sing "would be stupefied with wonder on hearing her" (Trissino 1524; in Prizer, 1989, 145); Dionigi Atanagi writes that Signora Irene Spilimbergo sang "in such a striking, delicate, and melodious manner that the greatest connoisseurs were amazed" (Atanagi 1561; in Einstein 1949, I:50); Valdgrighi claims that the singing of the *concerto delle donne* "delighted the court of Ferrara" (Valdrighi; in Einstein 539-40); Giacomo Grana confirms that the "*musica privata* . . . is the greatest pleasure that His Highness [Duke Alfonso] has" (Grana, letter of June 16, 1582; in Newcomb 1980, 27); and Paolo Virchi describes "the sweetness of the voices of the Illustrious Ladies who sing [my madrigals]," saying that their voices "easily increase the pleasure of my music" (Virchi 1584; in Riley 1985, 482).

Music produces pleasure on multiple levels which intersect and affect the listener with varying degrees of potency. However, modern critical discussion of pleasure in music offers few theoretical models with which to explore this phenomenon. Susan McClary observes that Theodor Adorno, "the only major cultural theorist of the [twentieth] century whose primary medium was music, as opposed to literature, film, or painting . . . overlooks or denigrates as regressive such [human experiences] as pleasure" (McClary 1991, 29). The works of Foucault, arguably the most influential social theorist to examine the topic of pleasure and sexuality, offer little insight into music's connection with pleasure. These apparent lacks have only begun to be addressed in more recent critical discussions, especially by musicologists who have turned to literary or other critical models in the formulation of their own theories. However, when the added category of gendered performance is factored in, the possibilities widen further, for gender theory is often concerned with pleasure, sexuality and the body, and it is through feminist interests that much new criticism has entered the field of musicology. Within this widened sphere of cultural theory, there are some specific intersections in the study of pleasure, music and gender which may prove useful for our exploration. One of these junctures can be found in feminist interpretations of post-Lacanian psychoanalysis and semiotic theory. While psychoanalysis offers one path to understanding the function and production of pleasure in music, it has also been used by such influential feminist theorists as Nancy Chodorow and Luce Irigaray in their development of new theories of gender. Such post-Lacanian psychoanalysis, often mapped onto the field of semiotics, has guided the investigations of feminists in multiple disciplines, from gender studies to literature, drama and film studies: Tasmin Lorraine (1990), Teresa de Lauretis (1984), Kaja Silverman (1988), Elin Diamond (1988), Elizabeth Grosz (1989), Laura Mulvey (1989) and Judith Butler (1990), all utilise the work of feminist semioticians, especially in their exploration of questions surrounding the female body, desire, pleasure and performance. Drawing on such psychoanalytical and semiotic models may then offer some further understanding of the pleasure found in female singing.

On a basic psychological level, pleasure in music operates as functions of both the pre-symbolic, and of the symbolic. Kohut and Levarie summarize this latter function as a "basic pleasure [that] stems from the energy liberated through mastery of the musical task" via the fundamental psychological process of threat-relief-pleasure. The listener first reacts to sound reflexly with anxiety, and then recognizes symbolic meaning in the tonal organization, rhythm and repetition of the music; the elimination of the threat through symbolic mastery produces pleasure. This mastery leads to pre-symbolic enjoyment:

> the listener reaches the union with the musical sounds which enlarges his identity to embrace a whole primitive, nonverbal universe of sounds after the original threat is overcome, when during the playful repetition of the task of mastery he has recognized that the emotions expressed in the music are his own. The ability to regress to this early ego state, while at the same time preserving the complicated ego function required to recognize and master the influx of organized sound, is the prerequisite for the enjoyment of music. (Kohut & Levarie 1990, 19)

Kohut and Levarie's simple Freudian thesis precedes a more recent position which draws on poststructuralist semiotic theory while basing musical pleasure in Lacan's concept of infant development. In his theory of artificial regression, Jean-Louis Baudry focuses on the listener as a spectator-subject who through aural and visual stimuli regresses to earlier stages of psychic development, particularly the Lacanian mirror phase in which the infant, lacking controlled motor development, sees its image in a mirror, or in its caretaker's eyes, as a coherent whole. In this Lacanian state, the listening subject crosses a semiotic threshold from the symbolic world in which he or she dwells into imaginary or pre-symbolic experience and connects with that earlier psychic state where pleasure occurs at the identification of the infant with a coherent whole embodied in its mother. According to David Schwarz, such regression constitutes a focus on the listening self as subject of the musical experience: "listening subjects are produced when moments in performed music allow access to psychological events that are pre-symbolic—that is, from that phase in our development before our mastery of language" (1993, 24).[7] It is this connection with the pre-symbolic that gives music its power to produce pleasure in the listener.

Listening to a female voice holds particular pleasure for the listener who has been transported to this artificial state of regression, for it is a connection with the maternal voice that makes our illusion of being re-united with the pre-symbolic complete. Kaja Silverman moves the infant's first experience of pleasure one step beyond Lacan's mirror phase, to within the womb, describing a psychological stage she defines as the "acoustic mirror": the infant's pleasure in the acoustic mirror comes from hearing, responding to, and thus creating a union with the sound of the mother's voice as it occurs outside the womb and is heard from within the "sonorous envelope." Guy Rosolato suggests that "the maternal voice helps to constitute for the infant the pleasurable milieu which surrounds, sustains, and cherishes him. . . . One could argue that it is the first model of auditory pleasure and that music finds its roots and its nostalgia in [this] original atmosphere, which might be called a sonorous womb, a murmuring house" (in Silverman 1988, 81).

According to Silverman's psychoanalytic theory there is a definite gendering of sound in the pre-symbolic experience. The mother's voice constitutes the acoustic mirror which bathes the child in the sonorous envelope, and upon emergence from the womb, the child sees itself in its mother's face (the mirror) which begins the splitting off of the self from the world, bringing the child closer to differentiation, language and socialization, and further away from the wholeness that the sonorous envelope represents. It is the mother's voice which the child first distinguishes, before being able to visually distinguish faces, and first attempts to imitate.[8] Thus in the first critical months of its existence —in the pre-symbolic stage of the acoustic mirror and during the formative mirror stage— the child identifies with a specifically female voice: "this suggests that our early acoustic experience involves a gender-specific ambivalence to sound, to the mother's voice, and by extension—to music" (Schwarz 1993, 31). For a listener, identification of gender in music can enhance the pre-symbolic experience, stimulating what Lacan would call a *méconnaissance*—an imagined identification or misrecognition of the maternal voice; thus the female singing voice holds particular potency when heard from within this regressive psychic state.[9] The female voice creates the illusion of a sonorous enclosure and evokes the memory of identification and union with the female maternal whole—an experience which enhances the pleasure of listening to music.

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[7] Schwartz draws particularly on the ideas of the "sonorous envelope" and the "acoustic mirror" from French psychoanalytic theory, and in particular Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror*, to outline a theory of listening subjectivity for music (Schwartz 1993, 24-56).

[8] See Didier 1976, Rosolto 1974, and Silverman 1988.

Of course, nostalgia for the pre-symbolic is not the only locus for pleasurable connection with music, nor does it constitute the entire experience for the listener. Schwartz questions how such a highly symbolic arrangement as Western art music can represent a pre-symbolic acoustic mirror: "all aspects of western art music are highly symbolic, and there is a gap between the experience of the pre-symbolic and music's highly conventional structure. Yet sound is common to both our psychoanalytic model and music, and it is precisely through such highly conventional signs that music can point back to the pre-symbolic, effacing itself, if only for a moment in certain ways, in certain pieces" (Schwartz 1993, 39).

The unique "semanalysis" (a semiotic/psychoanalytic approach to texts) of Julia Kristeva offers a solution to the tenuous connection of pre-symbolic enjoyment within a highly symbolic art form which troubles Schwartz. For Kristeva, art lies in the "semiotization of the symbolic" (in Grosz 1989, 57), in an often subversive coming together of the symbolic and pre-symbolic (what Kristeva calls the semiotic) worlds which is specifically gendered. In Kristeva's account, "the semiotic and the chora are explicitly maternal and feminine . . . while the symbolic is paternal, bound up with concepts of the symbolic father and the castrated mother" (Grosz 1989, 49).[10] In the normal development of the child, the masculine symbolic order is constructed on the basis of the repression of the feminine; yet at the onset of the pivotal mirror stage —the key phase which initiates a field of signifiers and sets the stage for the formation of a stable social identity— an "anticipation of the symbolic from within the semiotic" occurs, and throughout this stage a "residue of the semiotic" can be found in the symbolic (Grosz 1989, 45): Kristeva terms this threshold between symbolic structure and semiotic impulse the *thetic*. In the production of art and music (as in poetry, psychosis, perversion and other infringements upon symbolic order), the thetic threshold is challenged and the semiotic transgresses the boundaries organized by the symbolic. The usually repressed or sublimated feminine semiotic is evoked by the artist or musician from within the symbolic, and it is their interaction that engages and produces a listening subject, with the semiotic ordering the symbolic, instead of being organized as in the social construction of identity: "the very practice of art necessitates reinventing the maternal *chora* so that it transgresses the symbolic order" (in Grosz 1989, 57). While aligning the functions of the symbolic and semiotic in musical pleasure at the intersection of the thetic, Kristeva's theory also allows for a gendered construction which privileges the feminine in the experience of musical pleasure.

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[9] Lacan calls all recognition at the pre-symbolic level *méconnaissance*, or misrecognitions, for the pre-symbolic experience is in fact a "retrospective reconstruction" from within the symbolic order which still holds a social, cultural function (Schwartz 1993, 31).

In the powerful gendered discourse of psychoanalysis, the conscious perception of the ordered, structural, symbolic frame of music constitutes a pleasure tied to "energy liberated through the mastery of the musical task" (Kohut and Levarie 1990, 19), situated in the paternal world of the symbolic, and governed by the Law of the Father, while the regressive re-creation of semiotic pleasure is tied to the maternal chora, to the feminine. The identification or subjection of gender upon the sounds of music then, may hold some import for the production of pleasure in the musical experience. Could it be that in the construction of themselves as listening subjects, men and women experience pleasure differently? Perhaps pleasure for the male listening subject is concerned with the mastery of musical elements and relief of anxiety created by the re-emergence of the repressed feminine semiotic; yet a woman's pleasure may come from an instinctive encounter with the maternal in her recognition of the female voice, and, as Irigaray urges upon all women, an ability to rejoice in the feminine's refusal "to let her desire be annihilated by the law of the father" becoming empowered in the restoration of her "right to pleasure, to *jouissance*, to passion . . . to speech, and sometimes to cries and anger" (Irigaray 1991, 43). Or maybe the union of symbolic and semiotic prefigures an ecstatic union of sexual partners in their interaction at the threshhold of the thetic.

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[10] *Chora* is a word which Kristeva uses to describe, in Plato's words, "the mother and receptacle" of the semiotic process; it is a space "where social and family structures make their imprint through the mediation of the maternal body" (Roudiez; in Kristeva 1980, 6).

In the experience of listening to music, the semiotic interactions which produce pleasure in an individual on a psychological level occur within a historical social context. Roland Barthes insists that pleasure (or *jouissance* as Barthes prefers) occurs within the social space of the Text —an "activity of production," living and mutable and "bound to *jouissance*" in each experience (Barthes 1971, 164). The sixteenth-century listener understood this social aspect of musical pleasure. Renaissance Italy viewed music as a creative process, vibrant and experiential —something to be lived as much as studied. The composer did not yet hold a complete, if distant authority over his work; rather, the performer remained the central authority in the production of music. In L'Ottuso's words, "the singer is the soul of music, and it is he who, in sum, represents the true meaning of the composer to us" (in Palisca 1968, 158). Though composition and theory were heavily discussed, performance and reception remained the deciding factor in the advocacy of musical style: In Giulio Cesare Monteverdi's famous defense of his brother against the attacks of Giovanni Maria Artusi, he invites the theorist to refute Monteverdi by submitting his own composition, to "show the errors of others . . . with a comparable practical performance" (in Strunk 1998, 539). "Then let him allow the world to be the judge," Monteverdi continues,

> and if he brings forward no deeds, but only words, deeds being what commend the master, my brother will again find himself meriting the praise, and not he. For as the sick man does not pronounce the physician intelligent from hearing him prate of Hippocrates and Galen, but does so

> when he recovers health by means of the diagnosis, so the world does not pronounce the musician intelligent from hearing him ply his tongue in telling of the honored theorists of harmony. For it was not in this way that Timotheus incited Alexander to war, but by singing. To such practical performance my brother invites his opponent. (In Strunk 1998 539)

The musical score was considered a guide for the practice of music, and while music printing developed rapidly within the sixteenth century, fostering not an immediate philological sea-change but a slow societal shift from orality to literacy, the very first printing of mensural music, Ottaviano Petrucci's *Odhecaton* (Venice, 1501), was still within living memory of the madrigal's practitioners. The extensive production and dissemination of music scores within Renaissance Italy was fostered by a demand for new and innovative music to be performed by amateur and professional, bourgeois and noble musicians. This was music for immediate consumption, not only to be preserved and treasured as rare Medieval collections had been, but to be performed. In a letter of 1540 the publisher Scotto wrote to composer Claudio Veggio asking him "to send new madrigals to the printer so that the composer's admirers could have more of his work to sing" (Haar 2001, 551); the purpose of published music is explicitly cited as performance. Many more compositions were never printed, and most likely never written down, for oral composition or improvisation was a major skill of practicing musicians. The advances made by music publishers did not efface the concept of music as a social production, but rather, made the practice of music more accessible to small groups of performers unskilled in melodic or contrapuntal improvisation.

These developments are suggestive in the light of Barthes' theory of Text. *Jouissance* is bound up in the collaboration of performer and listener in an experience of the Text; production and consumption of the work are joined in a single signifying practice—that of "playing" the Text. One experiences the Text "as one plays a game, looking for a practice which re-produces it, but [one in which] . . . that practice [will] not be reduced to a passive, inner mimesis" (Barthes 1971, 162). Barthes acknowledges that in some practices, particularly in the popular Renaissance domestic residences or salons where families or groups of literati would gather to sing madrigals for their own entertainment, the performer and listener are joined in one and the same person:

> The history of music (as a practice, not as an 'art') does indeed parallel that of the Text fairly closely: there was a period when practising amateurs were numerous (at least within the confines of a certain class) and 'playing' and 'listening' formed a scarcely differentiated activity. (Barthes 1971, 162-163)

In other situations the performer and listener work together within a sphere of common cultural ideologies to arrive at an experience of the Text which through this very process produces *jouissance*. The work —the actual piece of music— in play intersects with social and cultural constraints to become the experienced Text.

This playing of the Text and the *jouissance* it engenders is influenced by the social space of the performance. It is important then for us to understand the difference between the performing/listening spaces of a twentieth- and sixteenth-century experience of women's vocal performance. For while we can imagine some common psychological element producing pleasure through the interaction of symbolic and semiotic forces in the listener regardless of temporal and cultural differences, we can in no way ignore the fact that the social space in which the musical experience takes place is radically different between Italian Renaissance and modern Euro-American culture. Even though the piece of music —the work— may be the same, the experience of that music in performance —the Text— must be different. The modern musical experience privileges the re-creation of a sonorous envelope, while the sixteenth-century experience evokes the social properties of *jouissance*.

In the modern performance experience, a typical audience member will usually choose to attend an early music performance because of some knowledge and appreciation of classical music from the Medieval, Renaissance or Baroque era. Although alternate venues, form and style which deviate from the typical performance experience are more prevalent in early chamber music than in other more mainstream classical performances, we can describe a typical case scenario. The audience would enter into the social ritual of the modern classical music performance whereby the audience places itself into the specific psychological state, that Baudry, speaking of theatrical viewing, calls "artificial regression" (1980, 56). We enter into a darkened auditorium, silence ourselves (and our neighbours!), sit in immobile seats, and at specific intervals discreetly and uniformly express our pleasure through applause. Such an atmosphere, Baudry attests, creates a womblike effect (ie. the sonorous envelope) which confuses boundaries and sends the spectator-subject back to the earlier phases of psychic development which allow the re-created semiotic pleasure of the "acoustic mirror" particular play.

The elements that artificially recreate the acoustic mirror experience are all modern ones, and are not present in a Renaissance performance. A typical experience might be found in Duke Ercole II d'Este's banquet entertainment on 24 January 1529, in the great hall of his Ferrara *palazzo*, where, after viewing the first of the entertainment, Lodovico Ariosto's comedy, *La Cassaria*, the trumpets sound and the guests enter the great hall, are offered perfumed water to wash their hands and take their places for the salad course.[11] There is diverse music and entertainment (dancing, juggling and clowning, comedic debate, instrumental and vocal music) throughout the evening, and at one point, the chronicler notes, soprano Madonna Dalida Puti sings along with five others (the Italian is unclear if this is five singers plus instruments or just five accompanying musicians playing viols, harpsichord, lute and bass and tenor recorder). Though the madrigal by Alfonso della Viola that she sings might be heard today, perhaps performed by Emma Kirkby and the Consorte of Musicke at any concert hall across the country, the experience —the Text— produced by each scenario is extremely different. Even in a closer equivalent to the concert hall experience, say a private performance at court, academy or domestic residence where attention is consciously focused on the performer, the social aspect of listening to music counterbalanced an importance placed on the individual's personal experience of the music. The social atmosphere of the musical experience is illustrated in a performance by the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* in 1581, during which the Florentine ambassador Orazio Urbani was required "simultaneously to play cards, to listen [to the music of the ladies], to admire, and to praise the *passaggi*, the *cadenze*, the *tirate*, and such things— all of which matters I understand little and enjoy less" (in Newcomb 1980, 25).

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[11] Among the guests of Ercole II d'Este, Duke of Chartres and later Duke of Ferrara, are his father, Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara; his aunt, Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua; his wife, Reneé of France; his brother, Ippolito II d'Este, Archbishop of Milan (later Cardinal of Ferrara); Francesco d'Este; a French ambassador; two Venetian ambassadors; and other ladies and gentlemen from Ferrara and elsewhere—104 guests in all. Details of this banquet and its musical entertainment were recorded by Cristoforo da Messibugo, steward for the Este family, in his "cook book" *Banchetti, composizioni di vivande e apparecchio generale* (Ferrara: Giovanni de Buglhat and Antonio Hucher, 1549; modern edition by Fernando Bandini, Venice: Neri Pozza, 1960). The musical information is partially reproduced and commented on in Llorens 1970 and H. M. Brown 1975.

This social experience of a Renaissance audience may seem to disrupt the semiotic *mésconnaissance* of the maternal voice expected from a modern concert-hall recreation of the sonorous envelope. Certainly the multiple social obligations placed on Orazio Urbani disturbed his enjoyment of the long-anticipated *musica secreta* concert and clouded his pleasure in hearing the famed virtuosi of the Ferrarese court, for on this occasion he exhibits no pleasure either in hearing the women's voices or in the social rituals of his specific musical and cultural context. Yet, typically, the sixteenth-century listener expressed great pleasure upon hearing a female singer, as well as in the behavioural conventions of the socio-musical experience. A domestic or courtly musical evening provided an opportunity for self-fashioning and display between the listeners and performers, salons and *ridotti* cultivated an intellectual intersection among artists and literati where discussion and performance of music and literature functioned hand in hand, and theatrical entertainment was well known to be equally concerned with social interaction as with intellectual or emotional engagement with the sound of the music itself. For the sixteenth-century audience, therefore, the pleasure incurred in hearing a female singer was intimately bound up in the *jouissance* of the social Text.

We are seemingly at odds then, in the transference of our psychoanalytical model to the disparate listening experience of Renaissance society. Yet again, Kristeva's semanalysis offers a pattern in which social and psychological elements of pleasure are not mutually exclusive but are both encompassed within individual subject experience, wrapped up in the function of social discourse, of which music is an integral part. For Kristeva the two elements of the pre-symbolic and semiotic do not remain undisturbed in the individual psyche, but operate fully within the social realm of cultural discourse. In describing essentially the same signifying process within the broader text of cultural discourse, Kristeva allots the symbolic and semiotic different names relating to Barthes' semiotic theory —genotext and phenotext. For Kristeva, genotext, like the semiotic, is the space of pre-textual arrangement of drives and semiotic processes, while phenotext indicates the signifying process seen as language or as a product of that process: it is "the manifest text presented to consciousness; language that serves to communicate" (in Grosz 1989, 51).

> The symbolic and the semiotic are two heterogeneous orders in the production of discourse, the constitution of the subject and in the regulation of social relations. . . . Genotext and phenotext function together in any signification just as the semiotic and the symbolic necessarily interact in any subject. (In Grosz 1989, 49- 53)

In the regulated social world of music performance and in the construction of a listening subject (and performing object), the specific cultural experience of sixteenth-century music making plays an important part. Just as the semiotic and the symbolic interact in the creation of the listening subject, producing pleasure, genotext and phenotext both function in the production of music, which, as a cultural discourse, contains social meaning and power in its ability to arouse and manipulate pleasure. Again the metaphor is gendered, for the signifying process of the phenotext —the social rituals that surround and regulate the Renaissance musical performance as well as construct an idealized conception of the female performer— are necessarily tied to the paternal and patriarchal world of the symbolic, while the repressed maternal semiotic —the genotext— must emerge to meet at the intersecting thetic and produce pleasure. The Lacanian pleasure of recognizing the maternal voice from within the sonorous envelope is not, therefore, completely negated by a social milieu which focusses on community rather than individual experience. Rather, the *jouissance* of social interaction in the experience of the musical Text occupies the same semiotic space, enhancing, not erasing, the pleasure of the emerging *chora*. As we examine the actual responses to female singing expressed by Renaissance listeners this intersection of symbolic and semiotic, of social *jouissance* and psychological pleasure, is discernible within the discursive images of gender and music employed by sixteenth-century commentators.

The Siren and the Muse: Dual Imagery in the Reception of the Female Singer

Perhaps the biggest clue to understanding the popularity of female vocal performance in the late Renaissance is found in the eyewitness responses made to these singers. With only little exception (Duke Guglielmo of Mantua, Ambassador Orazio Urbani and Giovanni Maria Artusi voice three notable objections) the recorded responses of audience members to female soloists or ensembles are extremely positive, even though in theory women's public performance was seen as evidence of their lack of virtue, and the propriety of women singing and playing instruments at all was hotly contested. Examining the significant descriptive distinctions of both positive and negative responses reveals a locus of discourse where the female singer becomes a metaphor for a patriarchal construction of gender which embodies the divine transcendency of the ideal courtly lady and the physical allurement of the sexually available woman. A clue to understanding the apperception of pleasure in hearing the female voice is found in this necessary balance of "angel" and "siren" which, like the experience of music, resides on the boundary of semiotic and symbolic experience.

Beyond the typical 'suavemente' 'dolcissima,' 'bella,' 'excellent,' and 'wonderful' which colour eyewitness reports of female singers, women's voices are continually praised with adjectives connoting spiritual qualities —"angelic," "divine," "heavenly," "transporting the soul of the listener"— imparting a metaphysical transcendence to the female voice.[12] The frequent use of such imagery is in line with poetic descriptions which had shaped Italian rhetoric since the fourteenth century, and reflect the highly developed ideology of the courtly lady. The idea of courtly love has its roots in Ovid's vivid depiction of pleasure and deceit, in which both man and woman are equal participants in the game of love. This idea flourished, but became somewhat imbalanced, within Medieval feudal images of the lady elevated above her vassal-knight. By the early Renaissance, it had finally evolved into a humanist idealization where the lady exists as a distant spiritual beauty, while the individualized emotive expression of her lover constitutes the central literary focus. This poetic topos is explored nowhere more brilliantly than in the highly influential Petrarchan *Canzoniere* (c.1371-1373). Petrarch's descriptions of his beloved Laura's voice were universally known in the later Renaissance, and they are echoed in every eyewitness exclamation over a female singing voice.

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[12] Many examples abound: for instance, the description of a 1611 performance "sung by the Roman Signora Vittoria Archilei, with her usual grace and angelic voice" (in Bowers 1987, 121); Madalena Casulana's performance at a banquet in Perugia, 1582, where she "canto al liuto di musica divanamente" (Bridges 1995, 110); an *intermedio* performed by Eufemia Joloza in 1558 where "the sweetness and novelty of the singing transported everyone to Paradise . . . Phomia['s] singing cannot be compared to terrestrial matters but to the heavenly harmonies" (in Newcomb 1975, 112); Doni's praise of Polissena Pecorina in which he marvels at "the divine sound I have tasted with the ears of my intellect" (*Dialogo della musica*, 1544; in Strunk 1998, 334); Giulio

> E i vaghi spirti in un sospiro accoglie
> co le sue mani, et poi in voce gli scioglie
> chiara, soave, angelica, divina
>
> her wandering breath [she gathered] into a sigh and then loose[d] it in a clear, soft, angelic, divine voice. (Petrarch, *canzone* 167)

In this sense, descriptions of the female voice as *dolce*, *chiara*, *soave*, *angelica*, *divina* simply conform to literary convention. When Francesco Patrizi describes Tarquinia Molza's singing (on the occasion of a performance for Duke Alfonso of Ferrara in 1568) as "sweet, wonderful and divine" he is echoing the poetic sentiments expressed in Petrarch's *canzoni*:

> No woman has a voice so sweet and round in singing, nor such pleasing of every manner . . . there is nothing to be heard in the whole world that is more sweet, wonderful and divine, than her singing to lute accompaniment. (Patrizi, *L'Amorosa filosofia*, 1577; in Riley 1985, 486)

In his adulation of Isabella d'Este's singing and lute-playing, Trissino does not even try to

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Caccini's description of the three sopranos of Ferrara as "three angels of paradise . . . [who] sing so miraculously that it seems impossible to do better" (Caccini to Grand Duke of Francesco of Florence, letter of February 12, 1583; in Newcomb 1980, 90); or the 1455 Venetian performance of a "damisela anglese . . . [who] cantava tanto dolcemente, et suavemente, che pareva una voce, non humana, ma divina" (in Brown 1987, 85, fn37).

express his indescribable wonder in his own words, but simply quotes Petrarch, saying,

> I have heard her voice, which, in the words of Petrarch, is a thing *chiara, soave, angelica e divina*. When she sings, especially to the lute, I believe that Orpheus and Amphion, who knew how to bring inanimate objects to life with their song, would be stupefied with wonder on hearing her. (Trissino, *I ritratti*, 1524; in Cartwright 1903, 104)

Admitting that literary conventions predicated written descriptions of the female voice is not to say that such eyewitness descriptions are inaccurate representations of actual responses. Classically inspired Renaissance rhetoric held powerful sway not only over speech and writing but over philosophies, ideologies and political models which fundamentally influenced societal attitudes and responses towards music and women. Joan Kelly admits that although "the relations between the ideology of sex roles and the reality we want to get at are complex and difficult to establish," nevertheless "the literature, art and philosophy of a society . . . give us direct knowledge of the attitudes of the dominant sector of that society toward women" (Kelly 1977, 20). The elevation of female singers to a transcendent heavenly plane is therefore not merely a tribute to the discursive conventions of courtly love poetry, but a representation of the expected response to female beauty and talent.

Along with images of the divine, descriptions of the female voice moving the soul or speaking directly to the affections of the listener align the female singing voice with the highest aims of Renaissance music. Even theorists who contended how it was to be achieved believed that the ultimate goal of music was to express the 'passions' or 'affections' and to affect the listener accordingly: Nicolo Vicentino proclaimed that "the goal of music is to satisfy the ears" and "touch the passions" of the listener (in Berger 1976, 38-39); while his rival Giuseffe Zarlino, although rejecting Vicentino's claims of chromaticism, acknowledged the affective aim of music. Even Vincenzo Galilei, who opposed Zarlino, claiming the ascendency of sense over reason, concurred that "the principal part of music [is] to induce in the listeners the same affection of those who recite" (in Carter 1992, 51). For the Renaissance listener, the female singing voice possessed this power to move the affections, the senses and the soul, even as the voice of his beloved Laura moved the poet Petrarch:

> Ma'l suon che di dolcezza in sensi lega
> col gran desir d'udendo esser beata
> L'anima al dipartir presta raffrena

> But the sound that binds my senses with its sweetness, reins in my soul, though ready to depart, with the great desire for the blessedness of listening. (Petrarch, *canzone* 167)

Reference to the direct affection of the soul is seen not only in poetic convention, but also in eyewitness accounts of the active or verbal response to women's performance. In an account of an *intermedio* for a comedy by Alessandro Piccolomini performed in Naples in 1558, the chronicler describes the crowd's ecstatic response to Eufemia Joloza's portrayal of Cleopatra in spiritual terms: "the sweetness and novelty of the singing transported everyone to Paradise. . . . The queen Cleopatra was Phomia, whose singing cannot be compared to terrestrial matters, but to the heavenly harmonies" (Erasmo Percopo, "Di una stampa sconosciuta delle 'stanze' del Tansillo," *Rassegna critica della letterature italiana* 19, 1914: 85-87; in Newcomb 1987, fn30, p 112). A similar metaphysical response of the composer Pietro Vinci to a performance of his madrigals by Tarquinia Molza is recorded by her friend and biographer Francesco Patrizi:

> One day Pietro Vinci arrived while she was singing some of his madrigals, and stationing himself rather far away where he could listen with careful attention, onlookers saw him raise his hands to heaven . . . weeping from the sweetness of it. And when she finished singing, he rushed to embrace her, saying, "Oh, my child, I thank God and you for giving me the consolation of hearing my works sung as I never would have thought I should, or could, hear them." (Patrizi 1577; in Riley 1985, 486)

Antonfrancesco Doni speaks of a musical sound that transcends even the "miracle" of the viols of San Guido della Porta—the voice of Polissena Pecorina, whose performance of works by Adriano Willaert Doni "felt, saw, and heard" in 1544:

> The music of lutes, instruments, pipes, flutes, and voices made in your house and that of the honourable M. Alessandro Colombo is most worthy, and the viols of San Guido della Porta are a miracle; but if you heard the divine sound I have tasted with the ears of my intellect here in Venice you would be astounded. (In Strunk 1998, 334)

This metaphysical transport of the soul, couched in spiritual language, can also be seen as a metaphor for the experience Kristeva recognizes as the pleasure of the semiotic or pre-symbolic. Although each performance context (experience of the Text) is different —the first results in a communal affectation of the crowd, in the second, the composer Vinci carefully isolates himself to consciously listen to the performance, and in the third, Doni experiences the pleasure of La Pecorina's singing in the intellectual context of a Venetian *ridotti*— yet each result of pleasurable sensation is similar. The female voice is described as speaking directly to the soul and mind, and moving the listeners beyond symbolic representation to a higher sphere of affection—a state described variously in Renaissance discourse as "paradise," "helicona," "parnassus" or the "heavenly spheres."

This type of transcendent encounter with the pre-symbolic, described by Renaissance commentators as a metaphysical affection of the senses and the mind, is associated with the most laudatory of the praises heaped upon Italy's favourite female singers of the sixteenth century. The descriptions of Eufemia Jozola's singing which transported the souls of the listeners to Paradise, the reactions of Pietro Vinci or the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara upon hearing the divine voice of Tarquinia Molza which so "amazed Duke Alfonso and Duchess Barbara" that "because of the wonder he found in it—he had her repeat it four to six more times" (Patrizi 1577; in Riley 1985, 486), or the incredulous admiration expressed by audiences of the various female singers at Ferrara whose powers of improvisation, "not fully understood" (Paolo Virchi), "amazed everyone" (Valdrighi) and "increase[d] the pleasure of [the] music" (Paolo Virchi), all embody a response which takes immense delight in the overthrow of the cognitive, and in the instinctive apprehension of the aural stimulation—a spiritual, semiotic pleasure.

In the sixteenth century, women's singing voices, and sopranos in particular, were seen as spiritually transcendent in the ecstatic quality they both portrayed in the singer and produced in the listener. The cultural metaphor of a high voice indicating a higher degree of spirituality was present in Renaissance thought, and the soprano voice was considered transcendent in its aural relationship to other voices by virtue of its range and quality. Just as in aural perception a soprano voice transcends other voices in pitch and register, so in theory the soprano voice range existed in the closest relationship to the divine.

In his *Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558), Zarlino compares the voice parts bass, tenor, contratenor (also variously called contralto or alto) and soprano to the four elements earth, water, air and fire, with the soprano occupying the highest place in the hierarchy: "the fourth and highest voice, the canto . . . called by some the soprano because of its supreme position, is analgous to fire, which follows air and holds the highest place" (Zarlino 1968, 281). According to Zarlino, each elemental voice part has a specific function, but while the first three make the composition beautiful and cohesive, only the soprano functions to move the listener: the bass sustains and stabilizes the harmony as the earth is the foundation of the elements, the tenor regulates and maintains the mode, the alto adorns and beautifies the composition, as air, when "illuminated by the suns rays, it brightens and makes everything smile here below," but the soprano moves from earthly matters to heavenly ones, as it "nourish[es] and satisf[ies] the souls of listeners":

> the soprano—being the highest of the parts—is most penetrating to the ear and is heard above all the others. As fire nourishes and is the cause of all natural things produced for the ornamentation and conservation of the world, the composer strives to have his upper voice be decorative, beautiful and elegant, so that it will nourish and satisfy the souls of listeners. (Zarlino 1968, 282)[13]

Although speaking in metaphorical terms about compositional voice parts, not particular performers, nevertheless Zarlino's analogy would have been taken to heart by students of performance and composition alike. When the best vocal performances are characterized as being "clear," "light," "high" and "sweet," the reviewer is privileging the soprano line and the female voice that would (in secular entertainment) sing that line.

Though Renaissance voices were expected to have very wide ranges (more so than modern voice type tessituras), and, as Ellen Hargis notes, "Renaissance music was composed without designation for specific voice type" (Hargis 1994, 3), the late Medieval designations of bassus, tenor, altus and superius slowly evolved into descriptions of specific voice types based upon the ranges of the four parts.[14] In the sixteenth century, any voice or instrument which could encompass the range of the line could sing the part, regardless of quality or timbre, yet in secular performance women's voices gradually became favoured for soprano and alto lines (and, in some cases might sing the tenor lines of four part madrigals, as evidenced by paintings of three women and one man singing a four-part madrigal), while in sacred performance the voices of boys and men (including falsettists) were still preferred. The acceptance of women's voices on the higher parts of secular ensemble music aligned the female singer further with the ideal of spiritual transcendency which coloured the perception of the soprano and its relationship with the divine.

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[13] "Il Soprano, che è più acuto d'ogn'altra parte, & più penetrativo all'Udito, farsi udire anco prima d'ogn'altra: la onde si come'l Fuoco nutrisce, & è cagione di far spdurre ogni cosa naturale, che si trova ad ornamento, et a conservatione del Mondo; cosi il Compositore si sforzarà di fare, che la Parte più acita del la sua cantilena habbia bello, ornato et elegante procedere di maniera a che nutrisca, & pasci l'animo di quelli, che ascoltano" (Zarlino 1968, 282)

For all its fulfillment of poetic convention and musical goals, the perceived spiritual transcendency of the female voice is just one aspect of a complex set of factors which converged to produce pleasure for the listening audience of the sixteenth century, and which propelled the female singer to hitherto unknown heights of popularity. While the encomiums and exclamations over female singers abound with spiritual metaphors, many descriptions of performance experiences also pay particular attention to the visual impact of the physical, resulting in a duality of figurative description which includes a response to the gendered voice as well as an awareness of the body of the singer. The following descriptions, for example, express an acute delight in the physical display of the women in question.

> During the eleventh course, a richly dressed young lady came out of the bower and sang madrigals to the lute superbly well. (Messisbugo 1529; in Brown 1975, 238)

> I do not speak of the concert of those three Ladies, rather those three true and living images of the Graces. (Bottrigari [1594] 1962, 58)

> . . . they moderated or increased their voices, loud or soft, heavy or light, according to the demands of the piece they were singing. . . . They

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[14] Examples of the wide ranges of singers can be found in the three famous basses —"Giovanni Andrea napoletano, Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, and Alessandro Merlo romano"— whom Giustiniani claims "all sang bass with a range of 22 notes" (Giustiniani 1962, 69), or the continuo songs written for *uno, due e tre soprani*, and published by Luzzaschi in 1601, which require the soloists to each have a range from g to b♭".

> accompanied the music and the sentiment with appropriate facial expressions, glances and gestures, with no awkward movements of the mouth or hands or body which might not express the feeling of the song. (Giustiniani [1628] 1962, 69)

Descriptions of elegant dress, physical beauty and expressive gestures make the reader aware that the female voice does not stand alone in performance, but is irrevocably tied to the female body.

"Singing is the most fully embodied kind of music-making" writes Suzanne Cusick, and as such it carries a direct threat to the patriarchal system which strives to suppress and contain the female body politically and socially (Cusick 1994a, 21). Several feminist writers have examined the many Renaissance prohibitions against women's self-display in public, as well as against their free speech (whether written or oral), which were generally viewed as proof of women's sexual immorality.[15] From humanist reiterations of Sophocles' oft-cited aphorism that silence is a woman's greatest ornament, to the anonymous attacker of Isotta Nogarola who quotes "numerous very wise men" saying, "the woman of fluent speech [*eloquentem*] is never chaste," the idea that the female voice signaled promiscuity tainted the careers of women singers, actresses and authors for centuries (in Jardine 1999, 56). These negative perceptions of the female voice coupled with patriarchal reproofs against the public display of the female body placed performing women in a highly contradictory position, where the exhibition of physical beauty and vocal eloquence might be at once praised and censured.

The metaphors which describe physical aspects of female performance in reception literature of the Renaissance therefore both illumine and reinforce the system of power relationships between and among the gendered bodies of the Italian Renaissance; they present an approach to the physical performance of women which allows for the continuation of pleasure in perceiving the female performance, without relinquishing the patriarchal codes which control the gendered behaviour of the body.[16] While the recorded responses necessarily position the onlookers as listening subjects and the singer and her voice as visual and aural objects, each of the three positive descriptions of physical beauty above creates a different patriarchal frame which privileges the male subject and subdues the immediate threat of the performing female body. The first deprives the singer of subjectivity by leaving her anonymous, while the second couches the description in poetic language that aligns the singer's physical beauty with mythical beings and recalls the imagery surrounding the fictional lady of courtly love poetry who is meant to be seen and enjoyed from a distance.[17] The third example places the actions of the female singers within the accepted norm of female modesty and decorum, and emphasizes the musical achievement (expressing the feeling of the song) of the singers' "appropriate" physical gestures.

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[15] See, for example, Austern 1989, Gordon 1999, Treadwell 1997, Jardine 1999, Jordan 1990, Jones 1990, among others.

Messisbugo, Bottrigari and Giustiniani praise the physical beauty, elegant dress and graceful movements of the women singers they are watching, calling attention to the pleasurable presence of the female body. But for a woman to draw attention to her own physicality placed her in a contentious position. Noblewomen were expected to be on display at court as 'ornaments of their sex'—beautiful, elegantly dressed, well mannered and entertaining, so as to "add their part of that grace by which they make Courtiership perfect and adorned" (Castiglione 1959, 205); thus they strove to be physically attractive so that their beauty might be highly praised. In the third book of Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* the Duchess initiates a discussion that will exhibit the perfect Court Lady, saying, "Signor Magnifico, all of us desire to see this Lady of yours well adorned; and if you do not show her to us in such a way as to display all her beauty, we shall think that you are jealous of her" (Castiglione 1959, 202). In order for a lady to secure her court position and gain favour with the duchess or queen she served, she had to re-fashion herself each day and seek every opportunity to display her talents: Regionamento Guasco, writing to his ten-year-old daughter Lavinia, who left home in 1586 to become a lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Savoy, urges her to practice her music; although "such a study as music which has to be carried on in company cannot be pursued every day," he writes, "by doing as well as she can when occasion offers, she will see how well she can perform and win praise" (in Kelso 1956, 228).

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[16] This proposes a gendered reception which privileges the patriarchal response to female performance. Unfortunately the dearth of extant responses of women audience members precludes a comparison of male and female reception. An exception is suggested in Suzanne Cusick's "'There was not one lady who failed to shed a tear': Arianna's lament and the construction of modern womanhood" (1994), which analyzes women's response to Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* through the tropes of gender and marriage ideology.

[17] The actual performance documented by Cristoforo di Messisbugo could be by Madonna Dalida Puti who is described later in his account of the banquet, however he chooses to leave her name unknown in this description.

Yet while the display of talent and beauty could be very beneficial, the courtly lady was required to appear uninterested in exhibiting her own refinement and skills or in seeking public recognition: "hence, when she starts to dance or to make music of any kind, she ought to begin by letting herself be begged a little, and with a certain shyness bespeaking a noble shame that is the opposite of brazenness" (Castiglione 1959, 210). The delicate balance that performing women needed to maintain was imperative to their good reputation. Bonnie Gordon observes that "in the world of elite court culture, in which self-fashioning involved countless daily performances . . . the distinctions between courtesan and lady were difficult to discern" (Gordon 1999, 19). Castiglione's character Signor Gasparo sums it up by saying "it should have been enough for you to make this Court Lady beautiful, discreet, chaste, affable, and able to entertain (without getting a bad name) in dancing, music, games, laughter, witticisms, and the other things that we see going on at court every day" (Castiglione 1959, 213). Of course, it was not merely a transgression of etiquette that the performing woman was in danger of committing, but rather, through her performance a woman opened herself up to the more perilous accusation of sexual immorality which could cost a lady her position at court (as it did Tarquinia Molza and Laura Bovia) or her life (as with Anna Guarini, murdered by her husband upon accusations of adultery).

The woman musician, through her public display of physical and vocal beauty, countered those strictures that maintained a woman should be silent and private, and by doing so signaled her sexual availability. Susan McClary notes that "throughout Western history, women musicians have usually been assumed to be publicly available, have had to fight hard against pressures to yield, or have accepted the granting of sexual favors as one of the prices of having a career" (McClary 1991, 151). The ability to entertain "without getting a bad name" was the foremost concern of the Renaissance female singer, yet, as Tim Carter comments, the role of women singers "as 'courtiers' could easily shift to that of the courtesan— their sex was fair game in the male power-play that made up the politics of prestige—and in both professional and private terms, they were subject to the men (patrons, husbands, sons) that dominated their space and controlled their lives" (Carter 1999, 452).

The potent sexuality invested in the performing woman may have added to the perception of pleasure for male audiences evinced in the laudatory descriptions of Messisbugo, Bottrigari and Giustiniani. Nina Treadwell goes so far as to argue that the secret performances of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* afforded the Duke a scopophilic pleasure in hearing and watching his singing ladies. "Physical beauty," writes Treadwell, "was an attribute given as much, if not more, importance than musical talent" in the employment of women in courtly service (Treadwell 1997, 58). As Treadwell points out, it was Laura Peverara's beauty that first attracted the Duke, and secondly her musical skill: "when His Excellency [Duke Alfonso] was at Mantua he saw a young lady who was rather beautiful and, in addition, had the virtue of singing and playing excellently" (Urbani 1580; in Newcomb 1980, 188). In several letters to his patron Cardinal Luigi d'Este in Rome, the Cavalier Giacomo Grana refers to the Ferrarese *concerto* as "musica di quella bella e gentil Dama" emphasizing the beauty and station of these women singers (letters of April 28 and June 16, 1582, transcribed in Newcomb 1975, 337). Beauty was clearly a prerequisite for Peverara's hiring. In addition, Treadwell suggests that "the element of eroticisim is made explicit by the private, indeed secretive nature of the group's performance" and that "the women were, in effect, guarded against common observation, yet, through seclusion, subject to the unrestricted gaze of the Duke himself" (Treadwell 1997, 58). Certainly the gaze of male viewer upon female beauty resulted in a widespread appreciation of the Italian *concerti di donne*.

For some Renaissance commentators, however, the female body on display seems to pose a threat to the male viewer, even as it affords pleasure. Duke Guglielmo's discomfort upon hearing and seeing the singing ladies of Ferrara, who were visiting Mantua with their patrons the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara, resulted in a strong negative response. His vituperous reaction was recounted by Count Orazio Urbani in a letter of June 26, 1581:

> [Duke Alfonso,] having with great ceremony caused His Excellency [Duke Guglielmo] to hear the music of these ladies, was expecting to hear them praised to the skies. Speaking loudly enough to be heard both by the ladies and by the duchesses who were present [Duke Guglielmo] burst forth, 'Ladies are very impressive indeed—in fact, I would rather be an ass than a lady.' And with this he rose and made everyone else do so as well, thus putting an end to the singing. (In Newcomb 1987, 92)

The primary objections lodged against female performers were not typically musical complaints, but were couched as attacks upon their virtue, ones which, as the hasty dismissal of Tarquinia Molza from the court of Ferrara attests, were quick to be believed.[18] Underlying Giovanni Maria Artusi's widely followed debate with Claudio and Giulio Cesare Monteverdi over the imperfections of modern music (*L'Artusi, overo delle imperfettioni della moderna musica*, Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1600) is a vehement objection to the performance practice of late sixteenth-century singers—an objection which Suzanne Cusick and Bonnie Gordon both suggest is a direct attack upon female performers. Cusick notes that members of Ferrara's convent of San Vito orchestra and court *concerto*, as well as singers Livia d'Arco and Laura Peverara, likely performed in the November 16, 1600, premiere of Monteverdi's *Cruda Amarilli*, which figures prominently in Artusi's deleterious dialogue.[19]

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[18] Some, however, believed Molza was innocent of adultery, as she claimed, and the victim of malicious rumours circulated out of professional jealousy by a certain Vittorio: a note written by courtier Alfonso Fontanelli to a friend on November 11, 1589 regrets that "Signora Tarquinia is leaving court, dismissed by His Highness, and Vittorio remains here in that same lord's service—so that, on all accounts, the Signora's case grieves me" (Durante and Martellotti 1979, 185).

> Artusi's long opening description of the famous ensemble of nuns at the convent of San Vito in Ferrara . . . serves to remind readers that women made music at Ferrara . . . [and] may now be understood as part of Artusi's overall strategy to associate the [disagreeable] modern with the feminine at every turn, for the mention of the performance of madrigals in a private home in Ferrara encourages just the hint of recognition that members of the recently disbanded *concerto delle donne* may have been involved in the performance. (Cusick 1993, 9-10)

Along with his primary argument against the excessive use of dissonant harmony, Artusi takes particular offence at the popular display of emotion and passion through accompanying facial and bodily gestures, as well as inappropriate and pervasive ornamentation:

> They care little for the pages of Boethius; of knowledge what they say is that for them it is enough to know how to solmise, in their way, and to teach singing to singers, introducing in their songs many body movements, accompanying the voice with these motions, and in the end they let themselves go to such an extent that they seem about to die; and that is the perfection of their music. (In Cusick 1993, 6)[20]

> Those [effects] which the singers themselves produce while they sing those songs, who slowly turn the head, arch their eyebrows, roll their eyes, twist their shoulders, let themselves go about in such a way that it seems that they wish to die, and they produce many other transformations, which Ovid would never have dreamt of. And they produce those grimaces precisely when they arrive at those dissonances that offend the sense, to demonstrate that which they do, others should likewise do. But those who listen, instead of being moved, are ruffled by its roughness and its poor satisfaction and

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[19] Anthony Newcomb cites the report of a Modenese diplomat for evidence that Laura Peverara and Livia d'Arco along with Hippolito Fiorini and Luzzasco Luzzaschi performed "Cruda Amarilli" in the November 16 festivities (Newcomb 1980, I:184).

[20] "Manco stimano, di vedere li Cartoni di Boetio; ma che di sapere ciò che dicono, a loro basta di sapere insflizare quelle Solfe, a modo loro, & insegnare di Cantare alli cantanti, le loro Cantilene con molti movimenti del corpo, accompagnando la voce con quei moti, & nel fine si lasciano andare di maniera, che paia apunto che muoiano, & questa è la perfettione della loro Musica" (*L'Artusi, overo fdelle imperfettioni della moderna musica* [Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1600]; in Cusick 1993, 6).

> going off their head they leave poorly satisfied. (In Gordon 1999, 27)[21].

Gordon observes that "Artusi's attacks ascribed lascivious tendencies to the singers—accusations that were particularly damaging if directed at women" (Gordon 1999, 28). The sexual implications of the singers rolling their eyes, wishing to die and being transformed in a supra-Ovidian manner is heightened, in the case of the second quote, by a preceding reference to modern music as a "painted whore"; together Artusi paints a sternly immoral picture of the performance of Monteverdi's new music.

The strong objections which Artusi articulates reflect an opposition to the performing female body, not merely because it is on display but because it is inextricably bound up with the female voice and female sexuality. Medical knowledge, social customs and religious beliefs all contributed to a widely held negative view of female sexuality.[22] Bonnie Gordon examines several medical treatises which further linked this disturbing feminine tendency with women's speech and singing: Galenic and Hippocratic ideas which "dominated medical practice and cultural understandings of the body well into the seventeenth century . . . asserted a sympathetic relationship between mouths and wombs" which along with "social mores informed by Galenic medicine understood the female mouth and the sounds emanating from it as primary sites of threatening female sexuality" (Gordon 1999, 21 & 18). Satirist Pietro Aretino extrapolated this cultural concern from mouths to musical voices, writing in a letter of June 1537, "the sounds, songs, and letters that women know are the keys that open the doors to their chastity" (in Gordon 1999, 21). The common belief that in women, silence equaled chastity but the voice wantonness, formed the underlying tenet which leant great risk to bourgeois and noble women singing in public, or even learning music at all. Such beliefs even caused some families to deny their daughters a musical education. Although no such argument colours the praise of his patron Isabella d'Este's singing, Pietro Bembo counters his daughter's desire to learn music with just such a moral argument, pitting music against chastity: "Playing music is for a woman a vain and frivolous thing. And I would wish you to be the most serious and chaste woman alive" (in Strunk 1998, 333).[23]

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[21] "Gli cantanti istessi mentre che cantano quelle loro cantilene fanno; che girano il capo pian piano, marcanbo le ciglia, travolgono gl'occhi, storcono le spalle, si lasciano andare di maniera, che pare, che morir voglino, & fanno molte altre trasformationi; le quali Ovidio non se le imaginò mai" (Artusi, *Seconda parte delle imperfettioni*, 41; in Cusick 1993, 14).

[22] Merry E. Wiesner outlines this negative view of female sexuality "portrayed in medical texts and sex manuals . . . [and] enhanced by religious opinion" in her book *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (1993, 47).

The implied wantonness of the singers in Artusi's descriptions equals the widely espoused convention of music's powers of aural seduction, making the female performers doubly dangerous in their display of seductive beauty and ability to awaken the latent desire of their audience. But where Artusi points to lascivious body language, mapping the music's subtle sensuousness onto what he sees as an overtly physical display of threatening female sexuality, most critics and reviewers placed the sensuous evocations onto the transcendent female voice. Indeed, an awareness of the seductive nature of the female singing voice was bound up in the pleasure of hearing a vocal performance. In many testimonies, the image of the pure, angelic voice is juxtaposed with its antithesis. This duality is neatly illustrated in a 1582 dedication to Madalena Casulana by the publisher Gardano in Monte's first book of 3-voiced madrigals, where he refers to her as "the Muse and Siren of our age." Once again the writer is following in the footsteps of literary tradition. Next to images of angelic purity, Petrarch in *Canzone* 207 describes his Laura's voice as a "sirene al suono" ("siren's song"), which produces "e'l cantar che ne l'anima si gente" ("a strange charm and singing that is felt in the soul"). A century later another singing Laura is described similarly by another poet in the sonnet LAURA ch'a l'aura—Voi Beata, set by Guami in the third anthology dedicated to Laura Peverara:

> Voi beata Sirena, in seno a l'onde
> Del bel lago natio col viso asperso
> Di sì chiaro liquor mill'alme ardete;
>
> You beautiful siren, born in the bosom of the waves
> Of a beautiful sea, with your face sprinkled

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[23] In a letter to Isabella d'Este of 1505, Bembo writes, "I would really like to have my verses sung by your Highness, remembering as I do the sweetness and elegance with which you sang the others on that happy evening" (In Riley 1986, 475). See also page 154, fn. 4.

By the shining liquor, set fire to a thousand souls;

Similarly, Gaspara Stampa is described in Perissone Cambio's dedication to her of his *Primo libro di madrigali a quatro voci* (Venice, 1547), as "divina sirena," conflating the spiritual and sensual qualities of this highly accomplished singer and poet:

> It is well-known by now —and not only in this fortunate city, but almost everywhere— that no woman in the world loves music as much as you do, nor possesses it to such a rare degree. And thousands upon thousands of fine and noble spirits attest to this who, having heard your sweet harmonies, have given you the name of divine siren, remaining over time your most devoted servants, among whom I am as devoted as any.
> (Cambio 1989, xiii)[24]

Another composer, Adrian Willaert, acknowledges his inspiration in the "angelic and divine voice" of the beautiful "siren" Polisena Pecorina, as described in Willaert's *Qual dolcezza giamai*:

Qual dolcezza giammai
Di canto di sirena
Involvò i sensi e l'alma chi l'udiro
Che di quella non sia minor assai
Che con la voce angelica e divina
Desta nei cor la bella Pecorina

Just as the sweetness
of the siren's song ever
captures the senses and the soul of the listener,
so does she, the beautiful Pecorina,
no less stir the heart
with her angelic and divine voice.

The conventional homage of blessed muse and sensuous siren given to female musicians merges the spiritual and physical aspects of vocal performance and reflects an entrenched view of woman as a combination of heavenly angel and alluring seductress, which has dominated cultural thought right through history.

In the Renaissance, this bipartite image of woman had made its way into literature, scientific treatises, conduct handbooks, plays, poetry and philosophical discussions, and is prefigured in the two most dominant images of woman in both religious and mythical symbolism. In Christian tradition, the dichotomy of Eve and Mary coloured all religious arguments for and against the inherent virtue, wisdom and social standing of Renaissance women. Their counterpart in classical mythology, Venus and Diana, model wanton allurement and potent chastity respectively in poetic humanist retellings of Greek and Latin stories. The works of two very influential poets were integral to the continuation of this dual perception of woman as both angel and harlot. Though neither were Renaissance poets, the works of classical Ovid and late-medieval Petrarch remained highly influential in Renaissance thought and literature. Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia amoris* and *Amores* enjoyed continued circulation throughout Europe from the twelfth century, both in Latin and the vernacular languages; while Petrarch's style and tropes quickly became the most-emulated poetic conventions in Italian literature. The two poets' treatment of women reflects the dual nature of the idealized Renaissance woman.

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[24] "Perche si sa bene homai, e non pure in questa felice citta: ma quasi in ogni parte, niuna donna al mondo amar piu la Musica di quello che fate voi, ne altra piu raramente possederla, e di questo ne fanno fede i mille, e mille spirti gentili, e nobili: i quali udito havendo i dolci concenti vostri, u'hanno dato nome di divina sirena, restandovi per tempo devotissimi servi, fra i quali, io devoto quanto altro" (Cambio 1989, xvi).

Ovid, in whose writings have been found the origins of courtly love, views woman as object, partner and opponent in his game of sexual love (unless the woman is already his wife, in which case no love can conceivably exist between the two [*The Art of Love* II, 153-55; III. 585-86]). Ovid praises woman's frankly sensual beauty, delights in her ability to deceive a husband (Venus and Helen in *The Art of Love* II. 359 & 562; *Amours* II v. 28), denies the existence of any woman he cannot seduce (even Penelope in *The Art of Love* I. 477) and urges her lover to obey her every wish, while deceiving her if he can. However, the game of mutual deceit which the lover and the lady play in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* was redefined in the Middle Ages according to the rules of Medieval *fins' amors,* which elevated the lady to the rank of sovereign and required her lover to pledge allegiance to her alone. In the fourteenth century the relation of the sexes in courtly literature changed yet again with the spiritual idealization of Petrarch's single mysterious heroine, Laura. The images of Ovid's alluring, sexually empowered mistress and Petrarch's distant spiritual beauty dominated Renaissance poetic images of women, and were often combined in a single description. The favourite juxtaposition of heavenly muse and wanton siren merges the sublime pleasure of the transcendent voice with the sensual pleasure of observing a female performer.

Interestingly, the description of the female singer as "the Muse and Siren of our Age" was not reserved for secular entertainers nor for a particular class of performers or style of music and was not limited to vocalists alone. Rather, this rhetorical dichotomy crosses socioeconomic boundaries, but even as it does so it remains allied only with the female gender, as it is found in descriptions of women musicians of diverse classes and social positions. Even descriptions of music making in convents by the nuns of Milan and Ferrara are infused with this metaphor. In 1595 Paolo Morigia praised the high quality of music in Milanese convents, saying,

> I shall go on to say how in this our city almost all the convents of nuns devote themselves to music, both with the sound of many kinds of musical instruments and with singing; and in some convents there are voices so fine they seem angelic, and like sirens they allure the nobility of Milan to come to hear them. But among the others there are two that are worthy of praise, that are inferior to no others in their musical excellence; one is the Convent of Santa Maria Maddalena near Sant' Eufemia, the other is that of the Assonta detto del Muro; these venerable religious, besides their holy observance of the apostolic life, are also exceedingly skilled and experienced in music, both in playing and in singing, and one hears select voices that are concordant in harmony, and minglings of divine voices with instruments, so that they seem to be angelic choirs that please the ears of the listeners and are praised by connoisseurs. (Morigia, 1595; in Bowers 1987, 125)

A similar depiction of nuns, this time from the convent of San Vito in Ferrara, is found in Bottrigari's 1594 treatise on instrumental practice, *Il Desiderio*. Bottrigari places particular emphasis on a description of the physical aspects of the performance:

> It appeared to me that the persons who ordinarily participated in this concert were not human, bodily creatures, but were truly angelic spirits. Nor must you imagine that I refer to the beauty of face and richness of garments and clothing, for you would err greatly, since one sees only the most modest grace and pleasing dress and humble deportment in them. . .
>
> . . . how you would melt away when you see them convene and play together with so much beauty and grace, and such quietness! You would certainly think you were either dreaming or seeing one of those imagined incantations of the Sorceress Alcina . . . and then finally when you hear the most sweet harmony

> which resounds in those angelic voices, and those instruments played with such judgement and discretion . . .
>
> . . . And you would certainly hear such harmony that it would seem to you either that you were carried off to Helicona or that Helicona together with all the chorus of the Muses singing and playing had been transported to that place. (Bottrigari 1594; in Neuls-Bates 1982, 44-47)

Both Morigia and Bottrigari rely on Christian and classical spiritual imagery to describe the sublime pleasure found in hearing and seeing the nuns of Milan and Ferrara perform: the singers have "angelic voices", which mingle with instruments in "divine" and "concordant" harmony to produce a sound like a choir of "angelic spirits" or "chorus of muses" —a sound which, fulfilling the highest goal of music, "please[s] the ears of the listeners" and "transport[s]" the soul of the listener to the heavenly mount "Helicona." In the eyes of their raptured audience, these wondrous female performers are, as Bottrigari quotes, "Deae Cantusque," goddesses of song (Vergil, *Aeneid*, bk VII and X; in Neuls-Bates 1982, 46).

Among the glowing descriptions of transcendent women's voices both writers are careful to assure their readers that the public performance of these religious women is in no way improper or unseemly. Morigia duly notes that "these venerable religious" faithfully carry out their "holy observance of the apostolic life," cautiously refuting the possible implication that their 'frivilous' or 'worldly' music-making might draw them away from religious duties or reflect negatively on their moral virtue. Bottrigari, too, makes a great point of countering the assertion of handbooks and treatises which found chaste, modest decorum and religious conviction at odds with the public performance of music. The Nuns of San Vito are modestly dressed and display humble deportment (presumably unlike most secular women performers, who could be expected to display "beauty of face and richness of garments"), and, Bottrigari hastily tells us, they are trained and conducted by a woman (Maestra Rafaella Aleotti), so can avoid the tarnished reputation of learning music by spending long hours in close proximity to a man. In the manner of their performance, these musicians appear to avoid the excessively dramatic or passionate dynamic and expressive contrasts that characterize late sixteenth-century vocal music; Bottrigari emphasizes that they sing and play "with so much beauty and grace, and such quietness . . . and in such a nice manner . . . and with such decorum and gravity of bearing." They are also conservative in melodic ornamentation, which in secular performance typically involved the frequent showy display of individual talent and an outpouring of emotion which Artusi so strongly objected to: "their passagework is not of the kind that is chopped up, furious, and continuous, such that it spoils and distorts the principal air, which the skillful composer worked ingeniously to give to the *cantilena*; but at times and in certain places there are such light, vivacious embellishments that they enhance the music and give it the greatest spirit" (Bottrigari 1594; in Neuls-Bates 1982, 48).

The effort that Morigia and Bottrigari expend in order to convince their readers that the public performance of the Milanese and Ferrarese nuns is proper and acceptable, provides additional evidence of the moral stigma attached to women musicians. The convent *concerti* performed for public audiences —in Ferrara the nuns of San Vito played "for most solemn feasts of the Church, or to honor the Princes, their Serene Highnesses, or to gratify some famous professor or noble amateur of music at the intercession of Fiorino or Luzzasco, or by the authority of their superiors," and in Milan the nobility flocked to hear the choirs of Santa Maria Maddalena and Assonta detto del Muro. But even though their music garnered the "praise of connoisseurs," and their deportment was "modest" and "venerable" they were women on display, and as such their physical presence evoked sensuous images of the musical seductress. Morigia cannot help but describe them as seductive sirens who "allure the nobility of Milan to come to hear them," while Bottrigari likens the enticing power of the San Vito concerto to "those imagined incantations of the Sorceress Alcina," the evil fairy who, through her beauty, courteousness and charm deceives Rogero into giving up his manly ambition and succumbing to a life of effeminate leisure where "music, poetry and pleasurable games" take the place of courageous battles and daring exploits (Ludovico, *Orlando Furioso* Canto X).

While siren, sorceress and fairy are symbols of dangerous female power over men, these figures are still common metaphors in a typical laudatory response to the female singing voice. It would seem then that the threat of a dangerous sexual presence needing to be subdued and mastered did not negate but coincided with the sublime pleasure found in listening to the female voice. According to Cusick, the radiant voice which transcends symbolic representation and the sensual body which disobeys social dictates both "resist control of rational *anima* and authoritative *armonia*" (Cusick 1993), and according to patriarchal convention need to be checked.[25] Linda Austern explores Elizabethan images of the female musician, similarly concluding that music and womanhood combined in the female performer were believed "capable of infinite spiritual benefit or fleshly corruption" and as such "required careful control lest they prove whorish and seduce the vulnerable" (Austern 1989, 424). A reminder that even dangerous metaphysical sensuality can be tamed is found in a foil to the Rogero-Alcina story. In Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, book 18, the hero Rinaldo is lured to a magic grove by beautiful nymphs who sing "triple high" and accompany their voices on lute, harp and viol, as did the three sopranos of Ferrara's female concerto whom Tasso greatly admired. Yet unlike Rogero who needed to be saved from Alcina by the good fairy Melissa, Rinaldo remains faithful to his quest, and reminding himself that it is all a deception, even though a pleasurable one, he cuts down the tree which is the fairy queen Armide's soul. The enchanted grove and singing nymphs disappear, and the men of the neighboring kingdom subsequently cut down the forest to make forts and towers. These stories retold from classic and Medieval legend in a new humanist guise remind the reader that music leads to pleasure, but a pleasure that is fleeting, effeminate and dangerous. To dwell overlong in the realm of such feminine pleasure thwarts patriarchal intentions and erodes the very manhood of the listener. Yet the knowledge of the finite nature and anticipated final resolution of a song allows the uninhibited enjoyment of singing through the emergent semiotic within the framework of the symbolic which provides ultimate mastery over the dangerous female voice.

The twin view of Muse and Siren is not mutually exclusive nor are the two clearly defined in relation to each other; rather they are bound together in a Renaissance vision of the ideal female. Both images are distant, unattainable mythic symbols of the highest spiritual and physical beauty, yet both are immediate and procurable, for in the Renaissance code of love, both virgin and prostitute were considered sexually available (each for a price). Together they created a divine combination of both goddess and mother of god—an impossible union which yet could be imaginatively attained in experiencing a singer's performance, where the voice transports the soul to heaven through its pure, sweet sound like that of a blessed virgin, and the body, openly seductive in its movements, and, by virtue of its being on public display, clearly sexually available, alluring as Aphrodite.

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[25] Cusick 1993 and 1994c, Treadwell 1997, Gordon 1999, and McClary 1991 all give examples of how this patriarchal control is asserted, and in some cases resisted in specific musical situations.

Interestingly, this combined image so prevalent in reception literature reflects a perception of pleasure in hearing the female singing voice which once again brings us to the threshold of the symbolic and semiotic. Feminist criticism aligns the patriarchal vision of woman as both virgin and whore with the limit of the symbolic and semiotic. As Toril Moi argues, "from a phallocentric point of view, women will then come to represent . . . the limit of the symbolic order . . . they will be neither inside nor outside, neither known nor unknown. It is this position which has enabled male culture sometimes to vilify women as representing darkness and chaos, to view them as Lilith or the whore of Babylon, and sometimes to elevate them as the representatives of a higher and purer nature, to venerate them as Virgins and Mothers of God" (Moi 1989, 127). This positioning of constructed femaleness on the border of the symbolic equals Kristeva's positioning of the musical Text (experience) in the thetic —the intersection of the symbolic and semiotic (or genotext and phenotext). Music and woman, in its patriarchal construction, occupy the same place, resting between the symbolic world in need of mastery and the instinctive drives and urges of the pre-symbolic which produce passionate expression. Thus in responses to the female singer, a dual imagery emerges which encompasses both music and woman.[26] In her article

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[26] This response is not limited to Renaissance audiences, but lingers on today, even being utilized by female performers themselves in promotion of their voice and performance; for example, Charlotte Church's first recording, "Voice of an Angel," was rapidly followed by one

"Sing Againe Syren," Linda Austern explores this parallel between Renaissance perceptions of women and music, concluding that

> women and music had both come to be regarded as earthly embodiments of the divine and the damning by the final part of the sixteenth century. Women, who possessed the natures of both Mary and Eve, were regarded as agents alternately of salvation and destruction, even as music was perceived as an inspiration to both heavenly rapture and carnal lust. (Austern 1989, 420)

Music has, after all, always been conceived of in European languages as feminine, and throughout Renaissance criticism it is loaded with female personification, being described as *padrona*, *signora*, *figlia* and even *meretrice*. It is an almost effortless step for audiences in the Renaissance to perceive in the performance of a female singer that pleasure which comes from an intermixing of their conception of music and woman — both images which reside at the meeting point of the symbolic order and pre-symbolic drives.

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entitled "Enchantment."

Chapter Five

The Italian Lute Song: a Performance-based Genre-system

The existence of a number of sixteenth-century manuscripts and music prints of compositions arranged for a solo voice and lute accompaniment, although small compared to the immense extant repertory of secular vocal polyphony, is yet enough to reveal a significant, ongoing performance practice. Singing to lute accompaniment was one of the predominant music performance styles in Renaissance Europe, as evidence from written, pictorial and musical records attest. It was influenced by, but not dependent on both the development of musical form and style in popular and art music and the emergence of music prints in a standardized, accessible lute tablature. Developing out of the extemporised melodic recitation of poetry by the renowned lutenist-improvisors of the late-fifteenth century, the performance of lute songs relied heavily on aural memory, as well as formulaic melodic and harmonic realization and ornamentation which would allow a singer-lutenist to perform from memory or with the aid only of a written poetic text or a single partbook.

Singing to the lute was also a performance practice particularly associated with women. Not exclusively a woman's genre, the lute song nevertheless was linked to venues and opportunities that favoured women's performance. This association increased throughout the sixteenth century, especially with the advent of the male-voice *a cappella* madrigal.[1] Yet both the lute song and the women who have performed it have been pushed aside by Renaissance musicological study which has historically focussed on manuscript studies and publishing conventions, privileging the male composer and formal compositional music genres over female performers and performance practice. By first defining the Italian lute song as a genre system, we can expose a continuous tradition of lute song performance throughout the sixteenth century; this will enable a tradition of women's performance practice to be visibly identified in the following chapter.

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[1] The following chapter will explore this aspect of gendering in detail.

Advantages of a Performance-based Genre-system

The Italian lute song cannot be defined as a formal genre or specific compositional style after the traditional method of categorizing musical genres. Rather it is defined by a particular performance practice which had significant social impact and promoted a continuous performing tradition throughout the sixteenth century, and is corroborated by the existence of associated musicprints and manuscripts. Currently, the field of music history does not recognize an Italian lute song tradition as it does, for instance, the English lute song, which encompasses lute-accompanied ayres, madrigals and consort songs popular in late-sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England.[2] Although these English songs range in texture from complex counterpoint to strophic homophony and in subject from serious addresses to light-hearted comedy, the performance practice substantiated by the manner of printing is enough to warrant the definition of a lute song. That a similar terminology has not been adopted in the history of Italian music is due to various factors. For instance, the wider range and more complex scope of Italian vocal music compared to its English equivalent has made lute song repertoire hard to compile, while the entrenched conception of the musician as theorist and composer still overshadows the study of Renaissance performers. Historical musicology's great attention to the readily available prints of Renaissance vocal polyphony and the subsequent wealth of modern editions prepared for *a cappella* singing has also contributed to a neglect of the scant (by comparison) lute song publications and manuscripts. Finally, formal and stylistic generic labels have been preferred due to the invisibility of the category of women's performance which is intimately tied to the Italian lute song. This reliance on formal musical study has served to further divert attention away from the Italian lute song and its gendered performance.

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[2] To my knowledge, only four other musicologists (MacClintock 1956, Mason 1997, Falkenstein 1997, and Prizer 1980) connect the term lute song with Italian Renaissance music, and all do so in reference to a specific repertory or narrow period of the sixteenth century (either very early or very late). MacClintock, the earliest to use the term, does so in reference to a particular group of 33 songs by Cosimo Bottegari, which she differentiates from madrigal transcriptions and *canzonette*, describing them as "genuine accompanied songs or little 'arias,' with emphasis on the vocal part, the lute providing an accompaniment of contrasting figurations and chords" (MacClintock 1956, 180). The term is again used to describe a specific, narrow repertoire in Falkenstein's dissertation, "The Late Sixteenth-century Repertory of Florentine Lute Song" (1997), while Prizer uses the term sporadically in his discussion of early frottolists. Kevin Mason comes closest to delineating a body of lute songs which encompasses various styles and forms, but he concentrates mainly on music of 1570 to 1630, aligning all earlier lute transcriptions with a separate tradition linked to the unwritten improvised songs of the fifteenth century. The term lute song is, however, used frequently and casually among modern lutenist performers to denote lute-accompanied songs from various European countries.

The need for a performance-based genre system becomes only too clear when one tries to account for the Italian lute song in terms of existing formal categorizations of music. This prominent Renaissance performance practice defies the common categorizations of style and form which comprise the elements of musical definition and allow scholars to divide and disperse so great a body of music into the more or less homogenous groupings we call genres. Since the Italian lute song encompasses such diverse forms as the madrigal, *canzonetta*, *frottola*, aria and *balletto*, both polyphonic and chordal accompaniment textures, styles ranging from improvised declamation to lyrical counterpoint, and printed musical sources which span a century, its definition according to conventional characteristics is difficult to say the least.

The two major generic oppositions that music history has projected onto Renaissance music —secular/sacred and vocal/instrumental— are immediately somewhat problematic for the definition of the Italian lute song. Since the first revolves around social function, one might at first glance casually place the lute song within the volume of secular music, for indeed the vast majority of songs sung to lute accompaniment were secular in nature; but there are always exceptions to the rule. The non-liturgical devotional *lauda* was popular as a lute accompanied song —Petrucci published two books of four-part *laude* in 1507-1508, including works by Dammonis, Cara, Tromboncino and Fogliano. Other religious works are found in lute intabulations dating from the sixteenth century: transcriptions of mass movements for lute are included among the dances and fantasias in Jean Matelart's *Intavolatura de leuto . . . libro primo* (Rome: Valerio Dorico, 1559); sacred motets by Gabrieli, Palestrina and others are contained in Giovanni Antonio Terzi's

Intabolatura di liutto, accomaodta con diversi passaggi per suonar in concerti a duoi liutti & solo, libro primo (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1593); Cosimo Bottegari's lute book compiled during his service in Munich and Florence (c.1574-1600) includes 24 sacred pieces (mainly *laudi*, psalm settings and several motets for Holy Week) by Bottegari, di Lasso, Wert and Pietro Vinci; and Simone Verovio's *Diletto spirituale canzonette a tre et a quattro voci* of 1586 (Rome) contains 21 spiritual *canzonette* in Latin, with voice parts in mensural notation, and both lute tablature and keyboard score for accompaniment. Bottegari's and Verovio's transcriptions of sacred works were obviously sung to lute accompaniment like their secular companions, while the mass movements and motets in Matelart's and Terzi's lute books may have been intended as solo lute pieces, although their presence among other works "per canto e liuto" is telling. Sacred lute songs such as the popular *lauda* would have been used for non-liturgical private spiritual meditation, or performed during holy week or on special feast days, rather than for the regular celebration of divine office. Of the small sacred repertory in the Bottegari lute book, Carol MacClintock remarks, "the compositions were certainly intended for household devotions—mostly for Holy Week observances" (MacClintock 1956, 183).

The repertoire was also not confined to lute-playing clerics, for sacred music was not exclusively performed by members of cathedral *cappellas* or monasteries, but by lay people, both men and women. A letter from Emilio de' Cavalieri to Bernardo Accolti of May 12, 1594, describes the renowned Roman virtuosa Vittoria Archilei singing a "Benedictus" for the elderly cleric Messer Filippo Neri (who was sainted after his death) and Cardinal Cusano, although "they wanted to hear *spagnole* and *galanterie*" (in Palisca 1963, 346). Another example of sacred music being sung by a predominantly secular singer is seen in Vincenzo Galilei's lamentations and responses for Holy Week, which were performed by the composer, accompanied by an ensemble of viols, amidst the "devout company" of the Camerata Fiorentino (in Palisca 1972b, 206).[3]

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[3] In addition, if iconography is at all reflective of fashionable attitudes, the plethora of angelic singer-lutenists decorating churches and courts unquestionably secures the lute song's

The division of instrumental and vocal music leads to further complications in the definition of the lute song, particularly in the attention to sources. Studies in the vocal genres of madrigal, *frottola* and *canzona napolitana*, for instance, regularly discuss their subjects as pure vocal works, concentrating on the cantus-tenor-bass or SATB arrangements commonly adopted for publication. The valuable "Sources" entry in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* reveals a common problem in the delineation of vocal and instrumental music. The discussion of sources of vocal music is divided into monophony and polyphony, with only a fleeting reference to lute tablature accompaniment in the brief discussion of the performance of secular Renaissance polyphony (Hamm, Call and Fallows 2001, 897); while the entries under "Sources of instrumental ensemble music to 1630" reveal a discrepancy which presents problems for the researcher of both instrumental and combined vocal and instrumental performance. While the author acknowledges that "a truly comprehensive catalogue would have to include publications bearing the words 'per cantare e sonare' or 'apt both for viols and voices', and indeed virtually all vocal sources since their music could be and was played on instruments," he soon sadly concludes that "this would defeat the central purpose of such an article, and an attempt has therefore been made to identify music originally conceived for instruments, in spite of the fact that many compositions resist this kind of categorization" (Edwards 2001, 1). Even Willi Apel's valiant attempt to divest mainstream historical thinking of the dichotomy of vocal and instrumental music in favour of a distinction between "ensemble and soloist music" leaves the lute song in a nebulous region, classified as "ensemble music" due to the merger of instrument and voice, but "soloist music" from its possible execution by a single performer (Apel 1953).

The problematic division of instrumental and vocal music which tends to exclude genres that exist outside of or straddle the boundary between the two positions, exists in Renaissance discussions of music, as well as in modern scholarship. Cosimo Bartoli's *Ragionamenti Accademici*, for instance, dedicates a significant passage of his third

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place in heavenly sacred music circles!

dialogue to a discussion of music which begins with an academic discourse on the discipline and concludes with a discussion of *musica prattica* accompanied by a long list of both composers and performers. Interestingly, in his discussion of performers, Bartoli divides his remarks into a list of singers and instrumentalists, concentrating almost exclusively in his discussion of singers on famous vocalists within cathedral and church *cappellas.* His list of instrumental virtuosi includes several renowned lutenists, but Bartoli praises only their instrumental technique, omitting to note if they are also singers. Neither group makes reference to the many *cantori al liuto* or distinguished secular *improvvisatori* of Bartoli's day who combined vocal artistry with instrumental ability.[4]

Since the categorization of music genres so often depends on their published form, the fact that sixteenth-century musicprints, whether published in score format, partbooks or with lute tablature, were all ably adapted for lute and voice performance further obfuscates the definition of the lute song. An extant collection of printed music may not be completely representative of existing contemporary genres, and especially in the case of early music, it usually bears little information concerning their function or manner of performance. "To define genre by examining surviving music narrows our perspective," writes Margaret Mabbett (1992, 128). "Many printed collections . . . are presented stripped of their original context and dressed up in publishing conventions," Mabbett insists; for instance, "we tend to think that madrigals were normally performed with one voice to a part, because this is how they appear in print: but some madrigal-books are now known to consist largely of occasional works which may have been performed by more voices and/or with additional instruments" (Mabbett 1992, 128). The extensive Renaissance practice of performing Italian madrigals with a solo voice to lute accompaniment has been all but erased from social history due to a modern literal interpretation of SATB partbooks or choirbook music prints, a fact that severely limits our understanding of this most important Renaissance vocal genre. As Mabbett acknowledges, "some types of music belong to a much wider context than we are likely to appreciate from the form in which they have come down to us" (Mabbett 1992, 127).

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[4] See James Haar "Cosimo Bartoli on Music" (1988). Bartoli's omission can also be accounted for by the occlusion of secular singing as a recognized profession; see chapter seven for a discussion of this aspect.

The problems inherent in defining music as a structural and stylistic phenomenon are illustrated in the multiple attempts to categorize and define one of the major traditional genres of the Renaissance—the madrigal. The madrigal is a nebulous genre, defined according to form, style, function, and even language (the 'English' madrigal and the 'Italian madrigal') or religion (the *madrigale spirituale*). As with so many Renaissance vocal genres, its name comes from a poetic verse form —a form which itself has no set rhyme scheme, metre, length or structure, but can only be defined by its free non-strophic compilation of seven- and eleven-syllable lines. At its widest definition, the vocal madrigal encompasses any musical setting of this poetic type, although sixteenth-century publications also occasionally include sonnet and *canzone* settings under the heading 'madrigal,' just as some early madrigals are included in publications of *frottole*. Yet the adoption of a generic grouping based on form necessarily has many weaknesses in regard to the relatively formless madrigal. Hence scholars have consistently turned to stylistic development within the genre to further define it, tracing the development from the simple, chordal style of early four-voice madrigals, through the popular five-voiced madrigal with its emphasis on expressive polyphony and word-painting, to later categorizations such as the declamatory madrigal *arioso*, the hybrid *madrigal-canzonetta*, the experimental chromaticism of the *seconda prattica*, the ornamented or 'luxuriant' Ferrarese style of the 1580s, or the madrigal *concertato*. The genre has been further defined according to function, as scholars have begun to point out the madrigal's various uses by literary dilettantes in the Italian academies and salons, in *commedia dell' arte,* serious plays and comic *intermedi*, as lavish cycles commemorating births, deaths and marriages, in amateur domestic settings, or sung by professional performers for a courtly audience. A functional definition of the genre goes the furthest toward an understanding of performance practice, but still the use of the madrigal as a lute song has barely been touched upon in current scholarship.

In contrast to the immense amount of scholarship devoted to the madrigal, other popular Italian vocal genres have sadly been glossed over in early music history as 'lesser' or 'lighter' forms of music—*canzoni napolitani*, *villanelle*, *frottole*, *barzellette*, *balletti*, *canzonette*, *canti carnascialeschi* and other non-madrigal genres have only recently begun to garner the scholarly attention they deserve. It is interesting to note that although they posess characteristics which the 'serious' madrigal lacks —most obviously a popular strophic form, simpler, often homorhythmic texture and predominantly consonant harmonies— several of these 'lighter' genres also contain elements which render their categorization according to form or style less appropriate, or certainly less illuminating than a definition which includes performance contexts.

The *balletto*, for instance, can easily be defined as a vocal piece "in homophonic, dance-rhythm style with strophic texts punctuated by nonsense refrains such as 'fa-la-la'" (Haar 1986b, 75), and it was produced alongside the madrigal by some of the great composers of late sixteenth-century vocal music—Gastoldi, Banchieri, Vecchi and d'India. Yet this formal definition says nothing of the true nature of the genre, as it was practised for the entertainment of the courts of Italy, being played (on the lute and other instruments), sung and danced by costumed ladies of the court, performed by professional actors in theatrical *intermedi* during elaborate celebrations, or even played and sung as suitable music to accompany social dancing. The *balletto*'s performance context causes it to surface more often in discussions of historical dance than in histories of vocal music, perhaps due to musicology's discomfort in handling musical genres which push it into the realm of interdisciplinary studies.

Other genres, such as the *canzona napolitana* and *canti carnascialeschi*, similarly have ties to theatrical performance, requiring a generic description to relinquish the confines of formal analysis and delve into musical function and social context. The most significant factor which complicates the categorization of vocal music is that almost all of the 'lighter' genres have a performance method which predominantly mixes voices and instruments, a practice that the history of the madrigal has tried hard to overlook. It is this detachment from *a cappella* vocal performance which separates them from the madrigal as much as their strophic forms, and has caused music history to deal less frequently with them compared to their more important cousin.

Despite the fact that in literature late twentieth-century criticism "has notoriously excoriated the idea of genre" (Colie 1973, 1), leaving many modern scholars "at some level resistant to, or suspicious of, the concept of genre" (Duff 2000, 1), the same is not true in music scholarship. While academic inquiries into music have certainly moved beyond formalism and, to some extent, beyond genre, the same kind of wide-spread anti-generic tendencies that have affected literary criticism have not spread to music scholarship. Concepts of genre characterized by formal and structural elements still dominate music history and analysis, and new monographs on the concerto or the motet, or their popular cultural equivalents like blues, jazz and hip hop, appear with consistent regularity from academic publishers, although tinged with a new type of cultural interpretation. As we have seen, existing formal systems shape and condition our understanding of music; yet as they organize, they can also dangerously limit our comprehension. Foucault calls upon us to overlook superficial boundaries such as 'form' and 'genre' "in order to perceive the circulation of entire discourses" (Duff 2000, 17). Still, given a pragmatic need to make knowledge both manageable and persuasive, I will not argue that we throw away such formal categorizations, but rather that we turn to a genre-system which will encompass and release form and structure within a base of cultural experience integral to the discourse of music—that of performance.

Unfortunately, the one element integral to the definition of the lute song —performance practice— has only rarely been considered a suitable defining characteristic for musical genre; yet it is precisely this element which will serve to define and encompass the lute song, further illuminating the scope of Renaissance secular music. Adopting a performance-based understanding of music allows us to cut across textually defined ones, not negating them but rather revealing them as relative and mutable, rather than absolute. In his recent article, Nicholas Cook argues for a performance-based understanding of music: "the text-based orientation of traditional musicology and theory hampers thinking about music as a performance art"; instead, music should be "understood as both process and product" working together in a relationship which produces social meaning (Cook 2001, 1). An examination of the changing formal elements of the genre can exist within the delineation of a long history of continuing performance practice—that feature which defines the lute song at its most basic level as a vocal song performed to lute accompaniment. A performance-based genre-system will also deflect attention away from the over-worked narrow world of the (predominantly male) composer and focus on the performer as the maker of music, revealing interesting gender biases within the social world of music, granting a heightened visibility to the participation and contribution of women, and allowing us to ask different questions concerning the social production of music, which the generic divisions of musical form and style have excluded.

The preference for formal generic labels which characterizes music history has overshadowed the common feature of performance that many in the Renaissance would have taken for granted. Rosalie Colie notes that in ancient texts revived and revised by Renaissance theorists, performance was a viable category for distinguishing literary genres: "there were genres based on the rendering of a poem—sung or spoken, accompanied or unaccompanied by what instrument" (Colie 1973, 10). A delineation of secular vocal music according to performance practice existed in Renaissance music theory. Vincenzo Galilei clearly distinguishes between performing the same song as vocal polyphony, which he calls *synphonon*, or as *proschorda*—a solo song with instrumental accompaniment, notably accompaniment upon a single instrument: "for example in singing an air such as *Come t'ahggio lasciato vita mia*," Galilei writes, "I say that when the soprano is sung to an instrument that plays all the parts, this is called singing *proschorda*; and to sing more parts is called *synphonon* or 'in harmony'" (Vincenzo Galilei, *Dubbi intorno a quanto io ho detto dell'uso dell'enharmonio con la solutione di essi*, 1591; in Palisca 1977, 216).

This idea is also expressed, though less deliberately articulated, in Vincenzo Giustiniani's *Discorso sopra la musica* (1628). Throughout this treatise on historical musical style, framed as an instructional letter to a young nobleman, Giustiniani consistently separates music "to be sung by several voices" and that which was "to be sung easily by a single voice" with instrumental accompaniment (Giustiniani 1962, 68). In some cases the style of songs and the composers are different within each category, such as in the early period of his youth when the polyphonic "compositions in use . . . those of Arcadelt, of Orlando di Lasso, of Striggio, Cipriano de Rore, and Filippo di Monte" vied with "a solo voice singing with some instrument the . . . Villanella napoletana" (Giustiniani 1962, 68). In other later periods that Giustiniani outlines, the same songs and composers occupy both performance spheres: "In a short space of time the style of music changed and the compositions of Luca Marenzio and Ruggero Giovanelli appeared with delightful new inventions, either that of singing with several voices or with one voice alone accompanied by some instrument, the excellence of which consisted in a melody new and grateful to the ear, with some easy fugues without extraordinary artifices" (Giustiniani 1962, 68). Giustiniani's comments on music are interesting in that at the outset he makes it clear he is not a theoretician or composer; rather, he declares that he will leave those technical matters to someone else and instead he writes about "the experience I have acquired while I was conversing in houses where there was no gambling but rather delightful occupations, particularly music" (Giustiniani 1962, 67). Where most treatises of the time focus on theoretical aspects of composition, modes or ancient harmonies, Giustiniani writes about music as a lived experience and thus reveals the musical function, context and performance practice of his life time.

As well as being represented in theoretical treatises, the practice, if not the generic delineation, of the Italian lute song was defended by the Italian humanists and their interest in music. Aristotle himself had advocated "the accompaniment of the human voice" by a single instrument —"by a Lyre alone, or by a single Tibia"— and his preference was taken up by the Renaissance humanists who agreed that "with more instruments its sweetness cannot be preserved, inasmuch as the melody becomes obscured and almost entirely destroyed" (Bottrigari 1594, 21). Aristotle's lyre became the Renaissance lute and his tibia the viol—the two instruments most favoured by humanist writers for the accompaniment of song. Bottrigari states unequivocally that "no concert of instruments should ever be given without the addition of a human voice—always a voice well suited to the subject of the song," and argues that to procure the greatest *concento* between voices and instruments, one should always use stringed instruments: "if, for example, one wished to duplicate the Tenor parts one should never use a Flute or a great Cornett, or an instrument of a species other than a Viol or Lute; because the manifest disunion or discord would be too clearly revealed" (Bottrigari 1594, 23). Earlier in the century, Baldassare Castiglione, who received a classical education at a humanist school in Milan and subsequently at the court of Ludovico Sforza and Beatrice d'Este, advocated the lute song as the most effective manner of performance. Through the words of his character Messer Federico Fregoso, he states,

> the most beautiful music is in singing well and in reading at sight and in fine style, but even more in singing to the accompaniment of the viola [viola da mano], because nearly all the sweetness is in the solo and we note and follow the fine style and the melody with greater attention in that our ears are not occupied with more than a single voice, and every little fault is the more clearly noticed—which does not happen when a group is singing, because then one sustains the other. (Castiglione 1959, 105)

The element of a clearly perceived text and melody occupies Castiglione in much the same way as it would occupy later sixteenth-century humanists like Bottrigari in their advocacy of a 'new' style of monody. The monodic style espoused by the Camerata Fiorentina, which would have such a profound impact on the development of opera, was essentially an extension of an earlier humanist advocation of accompanied solo song. The ancient Greek musical practices which inspired them featured a solo voice, either alone or accompanied by an instrument: Girolamo Mei states that "the singing of the ancients was always a single air, even when a choir sang, or when instruments accompanied" (in Palisca 1972b, 217). Kevin Mason observes that "the combination of voice and lute can be seen as a manifestation of humanism in which performers sought to imitate the musical recitation of ancient Greek poets who accompanied themselves on the kithara"; he points out that the lute far surpassed popular keyboard instruments as an appropriate humanist symbol of perfect harmony (Mason 1997, 75-76). The impact of a humanist emphasis on ancient musical practices and theories clearly supported the manner of lute song performance that remained popular throughout the Renaissance.

A genre-system is, by definition, dynamic rather than static "since the relations between genres, like genres themselves, are constantly changing, and because their relationship is often one of conflict" (Duff 2000, xiii). The genre-system of lute song performance (which for purposes of this study we will grant the chronological limitation of the sixteenth century), unlike its formal constituents which appear exclusive and fixed, is inclusive of multiple genres based on musical and literary structure and theme, which exist in constant flux, relevant to each other and the social elements which impact their musical-performance sphere. Again, such ideas correspond to Renaissance theories of genre; according to Colie, mixed genres and inclusive genre-systems govern[illegible] prevalent Renaissance ideas of genre. Observing the many lists of possible literary forms and distinctions in terms of topic or content drawn up by sixteenth-century theorists, Colie remarks, "within the idea of a genre-system, then, various notions of genre competed for attention and imitation" (Colie 1973, 23).

Acknowledging the lute song as an inclusive and changing genre-system allows us to apply theories of generic transformation first explored by the Bakhtin school of the early twentieth century in their attempt to outline a vision of sociological poetics and problematise the ideological dimension of genre. Bakhtin's theories of genre transformation have resurfaced in the resurgence of interest in genre theory which has infused recent scholarship, particularly in Alastair Fowler's inventory of the different kinds of transformation that genres can undergo in the course of their evolution. In *Kinds of Literature* Fowler outlines eight processes of genre transformation which hold interesting possibilities for the discussion of a music genre-system: topical invention, combination, aggregation, change of scale, change of function, counterstatement, inclusion, selection, and generic mixture.

Most relevant to the lute song is the idea of inclusion and generic mixture. This performance-based genre-system encompasses many formal literary and musical genres—the *frottola*, *lauda*, *strambotta*, sonnet, *canzonetta*, madrigal, and many others. Renaissance theorists were concerned with this generic mixture, arguing for and against the separation or inclusion of pure and mixed kinds, both in literature and music; but in practice, generic mixture was ongoing, as the collections and publications of multiple kinds in a single performing copy attests. Colie notes that "generic inclusions which we do not always expect genre-theory to permit . . . turn up constantly in Renaissance genre-commentary" (Colie 1973, 29). As various types of songs were included in the lute song repertoire, they impacted the style and popularity of performance. Fowler comments that with any element of inclusion, as "the inset form . . . becomes conventionally linked with the matrix, a generic transformation has taken place" (Fowler 2000, 241). The lute song can be viewed as a framing device for various inset formal genres which interact with their setting and with each other as transforming agents. Sometimes this interaction causes a combination of repertoires which results in compositional hybrids, such as the canzonetta-madrigal, or topical invention such as the rise of Petrarchism or the vogue of rustic pastoral themes in lute song texts.[5] Fowler's concept of generic counterstatement is exemplified by the clash of the serious polyphonic madrigal with the light-hearted, strophic and homophonic *ballata*. This causes not only a structural antithesis, but also a rhetorical one, which allows Orlando di Lasso to ironically exclaim in *Matona mia cara*,

> Se mi non saper dire
> Tante belle rason,
> Petrarch mi non saper,
> Ne fonte d'Helicon

> ("If I don't know how to speak well, there's a good reason: I don't read Petrarch and I've never been to the fount of Helicon"; in Petti 1990, 23-27)

Though the application of Fowler's categories of genre modulation reveal interesting intersections between the formal genres encompassed by the lute song, the performance practice was impacted as much from sociological influences outside this musical frame as from the structural and formal genres within it. As we explore the evolution of the lute song across the sixteenth century as it was constantly being reinvented and performed, we will become aware of not only generic transformations which caused and resulted from rhetorical, compositional and stylistic trends. For sociological factors such as an increase in music literacy and publication, the invention of tablature, music's function in new Italian literary salons, and the changing role of women's musical performance in society and especially at court, also contributed to the development of the Italian lute song. This performance-based genre-system, then, cannot be relegated to the examination of formalistic and structuralist elements. Instead, it must constantly be aware of the greater socio-musical impact of the cultural context of lute song performance.

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[5] On the bifurcation and mingling of Bembist and Petrarchan ideas with pastoral dialect in the music and poetry of the Venier salon, see Feldman 1991.

Historical and Musical Development of the Italian Lute Song

The Italian lute song emerged out of the improvised tradition of the late *quattrocento*. Although the lute existed in Europe as an accompanying instrument since the early middle ages, the fifteenth century saw an increase in popularity of Italian poetry sung by *canterini* (improvisors) to the accompaniment of lute or *lira da braccio*. This style of lute-accompanied improvised singing was popular in every level of society and could be heard in street and piazza, or among the great courts of Naples, Florence, Milan and Ferrara which patronized lutenist-improvisors: the renowned Pietrobono served the Este family in Ferrara from about 1440 until his death in 1497, while Antonio di Guido beguiled travellers to Florence who acclaimed him the best singer in Italy in the fifteenth century.[6] While the poetry sung by the early itinerant *cantastorie* encompassed epic tales, chivalric romances and even Roman history, the repertoire employed by the later court improvisors consisted primarily of Italian lyrics in one of a number of fixed poetic forms, the *strambotto* and *ballata* being the most popular. These traditional improvised lute songs formed the basis of the written *frottola*—the most popular courtly genre in the early sixteenth century— and descriptions of improvisors often refer to poetic genres which were later taken up by the frottolists.[7] In a description of a performance by Pietrobono at the Sforza court in Milan in 1456, his verse is described by Antonio Cornazano as

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[6] See James Haar, "Chapter 4: *Improvvisatori* and Their Relationship to Sixteenth-Century Music" in 1986, 76-99.

[7] See chapter three for more discussion about the *frottola*.

"ordinata frotta" (in Haar 1986a, 86), while Giovanni Cieco di Parma is depicted as writing and singing *capitoli* and Petrarchist sonnets for the Ferrarese courts, and the Neapolitan poet-singers were renowned as *strambottisti*— poetic genres which were all common in the written *frottola* repertoire.

The subtle transition from improvised lute song to written *frottola* occurred alongside the invention of music printing, singularly launched by Ottaviano Petrucci in 1501. The choirbook format of his early music-prints displays the *frottola* as a three or four voice song, capturing the separate lines of voice, lute (which was still thought of as a melodic instrument) and optional accompanying *tenorista* for viol or other instrument.[8] The music was soon made even more accessible by the publication of lute intabulations of vocal music. In the next twenty years the Venetian printing press of Ottaviano Petrucci produced six volumes of lute music. While all contain intabulations of *chansons* or *frottole* originally arranged in three or four distinct lines for voices or instruments, two of the publications include a texted solo voice part along with the lute tablature. These two important collections of songs for voice and lute arranged by Franciscus Bossinensis contain works by Tromboncino, Cara, Pesenti and others, and were published by Petrucci in 1509 and 1511 as *Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato per cantar e sonar col lauto Libro primo* and *Libro secondo*. Along with a third undated collection which appeared circa 1520, *Frottole de Misser Bartolomio Tromboncino et Misser Marcheto Carra con Tenori et Bassi tabulati et con soprano in canto figurato per cantar et sonar col lauto* (Roma, L.A. Giunta), these books house the written works of the leading frottolists and reflect the unwritten tradition of the late fifteenth century.

The Bossinensis lute books reveal that in the *frottola*, a stepwise melody line in the top voice (labelled *cantus* in Petrucci's choirbook arrangements and "la voce del sopran" in Bossinensis' intabulations) was sung while the more active tenor and bass lines (which typically contain leaps and wider ranges) were reduced to a single instrumental accompaniment, somewhat chordal in nature. Where a four voice arrangement also exists, the extraneous alto line is omitted from the intabulated reduction. William Prizer suggests that in "a great majority of Cara's works" the *frottola* existed first as a three-part song, and the *altus* was added later for its four-voice published form (Prizer 1980, 142). "The nature of the individual voices of the *frottola*," Prizer concludes, "is inextricably linked with its origin as a lute song, that is, a work for solo vocalist and lute (or vocalist accompanied by lute and another instrument) playing two or three parts below the vocalist" (Prizer 1980, 135).

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[8] On the use of a *tenorista* to accompany a singer-instrumentalist, see Lockwood 1975 or Haar 1986a.

Evidence that a three-part lute song was often composed first is found in a letter of April 2, 1535 from Bartolomeo Tromboncino in Vicenza, replying to the Venetian musical theorist Giovanni del Lago:

> You ask of me a transcript of '*Se la mia morte brami,*' and I send it to you with much pleasure, noting that I have written it only to an accompaniment by the lute, that is, in three parts and without alto. For this reason, if it were to be sung a cappella, an alto would have to be added. Had there been no such hurry, I should have arranged it in four parts and so that one part would not interfere with any of the others, and on my return to Venice, at the beginning of May, on a suitable occasion, I propose to write one of this sort as proof that I always have been, and will be, at your service. (In Einstein 1949, I:48)

Tromboncino's letter clearly outlines how the same piece of music was used both as a lute song and vocal polyphony, the two popular performance practices of the day. In this case the *frottola* '*Se la mia morte brami,*' was first written as a lute song, as we might suppose many of Tromboncino's works were, and later adapted for *a cappella* singing by the addition of an alto part; Tromboncino also alludes to an equal competence in composing *a cappella* polyphony directly, without a first draft as a lute song, for he "propose[s] to write one of this sort" as soon as he returns to Venice.

The invention of instrumental tablature in the early sixteenth century coincided with an increased emphasis on vocal and instrumental polyphony. This new taste demanded a better system of notation to allow fretted and keyboard instruments to play polyphonic music at sight. Affordable printed music also widened the lute song's accessibility to interested amateurs. Bossinensis' two important collections include rudiments on reading from tablature and playing the lute, curiously headed "Instructions for those who do not know how to sing." This equation of lute playing and singing is a further link to the older tradition of the *improvvisatori*, which would remain integral to the lute song throughout the sixteenth century. The explanations of instrumental technique and keys to the tablature are "obviously intended for novices" (Ness 2001, 40), and meet the needs of a growing interest in individual music performance and tuition. The advent of song publications with lute tablature indicates not so much a change in the genre itself, but the marketing of these songs to amateur performers. In a sonnet on the dedicatory page of both volumes, Bossinensis claims responsibility for both an original system of tablature and a heightened impact of the music due to the unequalled accessibility of his arrangements for performers of all abilities:

> Behold this work, so new and rare,
>   Of my tender years' great labors grown.
>   'Tis not a deed for honor shown—
>   My breast holds not such care—
> But since careful labor fruit must bear,
>   And each is bound, his conscience known,
>   To see his work lovingly flown
>   To every soul in this, our air,
> Smoothly voice and lute I've blended,
>   Genius, toil, and art unstinting,
>   Never equaled in our time.
> So take, my lord, your pleasure tended,
>   Of this book, its first imprinting,
>   Copies three, for you the prime.
>
> B.M.F. (in Sartori 1948, 240)[9]

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[9] Per mostrar opera inusitata & nova
  De miei dolci anni co gran stenti lhore
  Trappassate ho: non per disio de honore
  Che dentro dei mio cor punto non cova
Ma per che il ben operar continuo giova
  E per che in ner ognum e debitore
  A dispensar la virtu con amore
  A ciascun che qui giu vivo si trova
Acordatho col canto il suon suave
  Con ogni ingegno mio misura & arte
  Non piu scritto atal modo anostri tempi
Si che signor mio car non ve sia grave
  Veder questopra che ho pinti in sue carte

Lute intabulation of vocal pieces remained common, though less popular than vocal partbook printing, throughout the sixteenth century. Manuscripts and music prints with lute intabulations of popular songs appear in every decade of the century. Some adopt the form of the Bossinensis lute books; for example, Adriano Willaert's arrangements of 22 madrigals by Verdelot for solo voice with lute accompaniment (*Intavolatura de li madrigali di Verdelotto da cantare et sonare nel lauto, intavolati per Messer Adriano.* Venice, 1536 & 1540) include a texted vocal line in mensural notation and accompanying lute tablature in score format, in the style of the Bossinensis lute books. However, many other manuscripts are not as conveniently laid out as the Bossinensis and Verdelot books. While publications with both tablature and a mensural voice part appear in choirbook, facing page, score and partbook formats, some lute books, like two late sixteenth-century Florentine manuscripts (MS *Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Magl.* XIX, 168, dated 10 maggio 1582, and MS *Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Magl.* XIX, 109, undated), simply include the lyrics along with the lute tablature but contain no separate vocal line.[10] Other layouts optimize the choice of singing parts and instrumentation, such as Simone Verovio's *Ghirlanda di fioretti musicali* (Rome, 1589) which contains songs by Soriano, Nanino, Palestrina, Anerio and other members of Pope Gregory XIII's *sodalitas musicorum*, arranged with three voice parts on the left-hand page and keyboard or lute reduction on the right-hand page.

A preference for lute rather than keyboard accompaniment is demonstrated in a reprint of Verovio's *Ghirlanda*; the work was reprinted in 1591 by Vincenti in 3 volumes, with 5 new pieces, but without the keyboard notation. A slightly earlier publication of madrigals by Cipriano de Rore is laid out in score format suitable for any 'perfect' accompanying instrument, requiring the lutenist to read mensural notation (Cipriano de Rore, *Tutti Madrigali di Cipriano de Rore a 4 voci spartiti et accommodati per sonar*

De me fatiche avostre primu exempi,
B.M.F. (In Disertori 1956, tav. 19)

[10] For an informative discussion and comprehensive list of Italian lute song sources from 1570-1603 see Mason 1997.

d'ogni sorte d'instrumento perfetto, Venice: Gardane, 1577). Where lute tablature is included in a publication of partbooks, such as Paolo Bellasio's *Villanelle a tre voci, con la intavolatura del liuto* (Venice: Angelo Gardano, 1592), the tablature is usually included in only one partbook, in this case the soprano book, indicating the preferred choice of vocal solo lines (usually the cantus).

Musical collections which contain only text incipits but have additional stanzas or the entire text notated in the margin or handwritten under the intabulated piece, such as the Cavalcanti and Bottegari lute books, indicate that even where the text was not included in the original layout, especially in a collection arranged for publication, the song was still intended or subsequently came to be performed vocally with instrumental accompaniment. Arthur Ness comments that such sources are "representative [of] collections gathered by professional lutenist singers" but similar manuscripts and publications exist which might also have been owned by aristocratic or bourgeois amateurs (Ness 2001, 40). In fact, in the early part of the century it was common to keep music and poetry for singing in separate collections. Donna Cardamone and James Haar both note the popularity at the turn of the century of miniature poetry books (sometimes called *opuscoli*), which proclaim on their title pages the suitability of the verses within for singing to instrumental accompaniment (Cardamone 1990, 55; Haar 1986a 79).

Some of the poetry for singing which Isabella d'Este collected from her favourite courtiers and poets has survived in MS Mantua *Biblioteca Comunale* A.I.4, identified by Claudio Gallico and corroborated by William Prizer as "un libro di poesie per musica" possibly owned by the Este princess (Gallico 1961; Prizer 1980). The manuscript contains 378 poems collected between 1504-1510 —72 sonnets, 128 *strambotti*, 45 *canzonette* and *ode*, 83 *frottole*, 37 *barzellette*, one *predica d'amore*, 8 *capitoli*, and one *canzone*— 157 of which also exist in extant musical settings (three of the poems possess two settings, while one has three different musical arrangements). Prizer outlines three clues to support the argument that the manuscript was used as a repository for poetry sent to Isabella either with existing music or to be set to music and performed as lute songs. First, the texts are organized by poetic form, making it easy to sing any one *strambotto* to the same tune;

secondly the irregular, "loose" binding of the manuscript allows sheets to be added to any section at different periods during its compilation; and thirdly, existing correspondence shows that such manuscripts were used at Mantua for the recording of texts. On April 30, 1503, for instance, Tolomeo Spagnuolo sent Isabella several musical settings by Marchetto Cara, saying, "the words of the songs are notated as usual on a page in one of the little notebooks" (in Prizer 1980, 31-32). Spagnuolo's letter supports the common practice of separately recording music and lyrics which would be performed together. This practice has unfortunately coloured our view of Renaissance music, for the existence of untexted music has generally been taken as evidence of instrumental performance, while the original intention of accompanied solo song performance has been obscured by the separation of music and poetic text.

The separation of song lyrics and musical settings is complementary to the practice of performing different poems to the same formulaic tune, designed to fit a certain poetic form and metre. On August 23, 1504, Isabella d'Este received a letter from a favourite courtier, her cousin Niccolò da Corregio, illustrating this familiar convention:

> Concerning the *canzone* that your Excellency asked me to choose from Petrarch and that you wanted to have set to music, I have chosen one of those that pleases me the most and begins "Si è debile il filo a cui s'atiene"; it appears to me that a good song could be written on it since the lines grow and then diminish; and so that your Excellency will know that it pleases me, I am sending a poem of mine in imitation of it. So that, having music written for the Petarchan [poem], with the same music you can also sing mine, if it does not displease you. [I am sending] not only this one, but also a reconciliation of love, written also in the style of the Petrarchan [*canzone*] that begins "Chiare, dolci e fresche aque" [*recte* Chiare, fresche e dolci acque"]. (in Prizer 1980, 58)

A setting of Petrarch's *Si è debile il filo* is ascribed to Bartolomeo Tromboncino in Petrucci's seventh book of *frottole* (1507).

Another letter to Isabella d'Este, this one from Galeotto del Carretto, details both multiple settings of individual poems of the same form and single settings adaptable to multiple poems of the same form:

> Your Ladyship . . . promised to send me some songs on my *barzellette* composed by Tromboncino, and I still have not received them. Therefore,

> I beg you to send them by the present rider of our Lordship . . . The songs of the *barzellette* that I would like are these: *Lassa o donna i dolci sguardi, pace hormai o mei sospiri*, etc., *Se gran festa mi mostrarsti*, etc., *Donna sai come tuo sono, e ch'indarno per to stento ma se teco mi lamento, tu mi dici che son bono*, etc. I would also like a new *aerea de capitolo* if this is possible. (Letter of January 14, 1497; in Prizer 1980, 60)

The *aerea de capitolo* requested by Carretto was a typical melody written to be sung to any number of suitable poems. The collections of *frottole* published by Ottaviano Petrucci contain several such formulaic settings, usually entitled *Aer* or *Modo* and including the poetic type in the title. For instance, a *Modo de cantar sonetti*, *Aer de versi latini* and an *Aer de Capitoli* are all published in Petrucci's collection entitled *Strambotti, Ode, Frottole, Sonetti. Et modo de cantar versi latini e capituli. Libro Quarto* of 1505.[11]

Ex. 3. Modo de cantar

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[11] Modern edition in Schwartz 1967.

Although set with four mensural voice parts in Petrucci's publication, this *Modo de cantar sonetti* is indicative of a lute song setting for the formulaic recitation of poetry to instrumental accompaniment. The lyrical cantus outlines a fairly simple, but interesting melody which moves smoothly in stepwise motion within the range of an octave, and builds to florid intensity at the final cadence. The *bassus* supports the song with long sustained notes, moving in characteristic leaps of fourths and fifths; while the tenor and altus continually cross each other and exchange notes, often moving in wide leaps and with more syncopation and rhythmic suspensions than the other two voices.[12] While the cantus comprises a highly singable melody, the lower three lines lend themselves to instrumental interpretation. If performed solely with lute, the *altus* would be omitted or subsumed within the lute accompaniment; leaving out the tenor line instead would deprive the song of the attractive contrasting motion between tenor and bass in the last four measures. Alternatively, the tenor (or *altus*) could be played on a viol or second lute, while the remaining two lines are combined in the lute accompaniment; or the three lower voices could be rendered on three separate instruments.

These interchangeable *modo* are merely the written counterparts to the ongoing improvised tradition still practiced in the Italian courts, a convention not unlike the custom of *contrafacta* practiced by the Medieval troubadours. One of Castiglione's characters remarks in *Il Libro di Cortegiano* that this manner of improvised singing to lute or "viola" accompaniment —"il cantare alla viola per recitare"— is in fact his favourite manner of performance: "but especially it is singing recitative with the viola that seems to me most delightful, as this gives to the words a wonderful charm and effectiveness" (Castiglione 1959, 105). The improvised recitative of the late fifteenth century style was clearly still in vogue in the 1520s when Castiglione was writing. The delight experienced by a clear appreciation of a melody and text blended in a single beautiful voice and accompanied skillfully on the lute or other plucked instrument remained compelling despite the fashionable rise of the *a cappella* madrigal.

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[12] The tenor and altus lines are arranged in reverse order in this piece as in several works in Petrucci's Book IV, further indicating the interchangeability of these two parts.

Evidence that the use of formulaic musical settings for sung-recitation of poetry lasted well into the sixteenth century exists in a handwritten appendix to Vincenzo Galilei's *Fronimo Diologa* compiled sometime in the two penultimate decades of the century. MS *Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Landau-Finaly Mus. 2* contains 20 pieces entirely in the hand of Vincenzo Galilei, including seven works for solo lute and fourteen madrigals with lute tablature and facing mensural notation of the vocal line; it has been estimated by Claude Palisca to have been copied in Florence c.1568-84. The second appendix, MS *Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, F.III.10431I,* is only partly in the hand of Vincenzo Galilei, but it includes among its ten pieces in lute tablature two untexted 'arias' which are listed as formulae for singing *sonetti* and *capitoli*—evidence of the enduring improvisatory element of the Italian lute song. *Arie*, usually designated for specific poetic forms or metres such as *ottava rime* and *terza rime*, occur occasionally in madrigal prints, and a whole collection of *arie* for sonnets, *terze rime*, and other poetic forms edited by the Neapolitan musician Rocco Rodio was published in partbook form in 1577 as *Aeri raccolti inseime . . . dove si cantano sonetti, stanze et terze rime*. In fact as late as 1600 when Bottegari likely completed (or at least was still using) his manuscript collection of lute songs begun November 4, 1574, he included seven *arie senza parole* suitable for use with any poem which fit the appropriate *ottava rima*, *terza rima* or other specific metrical forms.[13] The formulaic *arie* does not fade with the sixteenth century, for Mason observes that "at least nine seventeenth-century lute sources also include such tablatures" (Mason 1997, 92, fn41).

Although manuscript and printed collections of popular song arrangements in lute tablature succeeded in boosting the lute song's proliferation and accessibility, the aspiring singer-lutenist was not limited to a reliance on intabulated music. The lute song undoubtedly remained a highly oral discipline; many songs were passed on with little or no written aid from teacher to student. But for those of a more literate mind, the mensural notation of songs in score, choirbook or even partbook form presented limitless musical opportunities. A letter of 1534 from the Venetian music patron Ruberto Strozzi mentions the dual skill of Polisena Pecorina, who "*canta sul leuto benissimo, ed in su' libri*": Newcomb translates this passage as "who sings very well to the lute and also from partbooks," while Richard Agee's translation reads "who sings very well both in improvising and in reading music" (Newcomb 1975, 113 fn35; Agee 1983, 2). Whichever literal translation is preferred the distinction between the oral lute song tradition of *canta sul leuto* and reading music notation —*canta su' libri*— is very clear, and obviously the talented Pecorina excelled at both.

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[13] See MacClintock 1956 for a discussion of the dates of compilation and use of the Bottegari lute book.

Printed sets of partbooks originated again in Venice with Ottaviano Petrucci, beginning with the publication of the collection *Motetti C* in 1504, and rapidly became one of the principal formats of printed music in the sixteenth century. Iconography reveals that partbooks were commonly used by singer-lutenists as well as by vocal or instrumental ensembles. Commenting on a portrait by Caravaggio entitled *The Lute Player*, in which the sitter holds a lute with a partbook open before him, Barbara Russano Hanning notes that "the fact that only the bass part of a four-part madrigal is shown [in fact the bass parts of two madrigals from Arcadelt's *Il primo libro di madrigali a quatro voci*, 1539] reflects the up-to-date performance practice of the singers of the time: the performer would have sung the soprano part and its text from memory, improvising ornamentation appropriate to the affections of the words, while at the same time rendering on the lute a simple accompaniment based on the printed music open before him or her" (Hanning 1989, 5). The female performer in Orazio Gentileschi's *The Lute Player* also appears to be reading from an open partbook. By comparison, in Bartolommeo Veneto's *La Lautista* the young woman plucking a lute is reading from a bound collection in choirbook format, with all three parts (the lower two labelled "tenor" and "basus" [sic]) of an unidentified but legible piece clearly visible.[14] Reading from a choirbook would afford the performer visual aides for both the cantus, or whichever vocal line was chosen to be sung, and the accompanying parts performed instrumentally, but aural memory would necessarily play a large role in lute song performance no matter which written musical aides were at hand. Just such an improvised accompaniment or 'realization' from a bass part is referred to by Alessandro Striggio in a letter of 1584: "I had written out the intabulation [of the piece] for the lute, but I left it behind in Mantua. But it will not matter, for Signor Giulio [Caccini] can easily improvise above the bass on the lute or the harpsichord" (in Mason 1997, 106). That partbooks typically include text underlay in all voice parts, while choirbook and score formats frequently contain only incipits, does not necessarily imply that some songs could only be sung *a cappella* and others were performed instrumentally. Rather, it again points to the role of memory in performance and indicates the easy exchange of sung soprano, alto, tenor and bass lines with accompaniment on one or more instruments. Lute song performance was not diminished with the advent of the four or five-voiced madrigal, or the more popular printing style of single-voice partbooks. A skilled performer, especially one experienced in the earlier improvised tradition, could easily have read mensural notation as quickly as tablature or improvised a harmonic texture from a single voice to accompany the melodic line being sung.

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[14] Not every version of the much-copied painting contains legible music books; these observations are made regarding the copy at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. See Colin Slim (1997) for an interesting comparison of the 23 copies of Veneto's "Lute-Playing Woman," including transcriptions of the musical notation, which his democratic survey of twenty musicologists concludes by majority opinion to be a *frottola-lauda*.

In addition to iconographical sources, the many title pages of published song collections in mensural notation which read "per cantare e sonare" indicate the widespread practice of combining instruments and voices in a rendition of *frottole*, *madrigali* or *canzone*. The lengthy titlepage of a 1559 publication in three volumes by Antonio Gardane (Venice) featuring the works of Adrian Willaert and Cipriano de Rore gives a good example of a collection of popular songs intended for a flexible performance practice:

> *Fantasie Recercari Contrapunti a tre voci di M. Adriano & de altri autori appropriati per cantare & sonare d'ogni sorte di stromenti condui Regina Celi, l'uno di M. Adriano & l'altro di M. Cipriano, sopra una medesimo Canto Fermo, novamente per Antonio Gardano ristampati. Libro primo.*

A reprint of the edition in 1593 reveals that the practice was still in vogue towards the end of the century. Similar examples of collections printed in mensural notation but intended to be sung to instrumental accompaniment, primarily lute and keyboard, were produced in every decade of the sixteenth century, keeping up with the market demand for accessible, popular music, especially by the leading madrigalists. Only at the end of the century does the flexible, orally-based performance seem to be replaced by an entirely more specific and literate practice, for musicprints in score format begin to outnumber choirbooks and partbooks, and those collections labelled "per sonare et cantare" are specifically intended for one instrument or another. The 1602 publication of arrangements for voice and lute by Heteroclito Giancarli, *Compositioni musicali intavolate per cantare et sonare nel liuto* (Venice, 1602), contains 19 vocal pieces arranged for lute with the texted canto line in mensural notation; while Luzzasco Luzzaschi's famous *Madrigali per cantare e sonare a uno, a doi, e tre soprani* (Rome, 1601) takes a modern approach in its score format with voice and keyboard parts in mensural notation. Music with figured bass or with written-out accompaniments for harpsichord or organ also increases in popularity, until this new continuo-song finally replaces the more flexible lute song tradition.

Through the sixteenth-century, the lute song's development from chordal to polyphonic accompaniment occurred with the adoption of new contrapuntal material for accompanied vocal performance. Yet the lute song's encompassing of the new polyphonic madrigal happened slowly, for the importance of expressing all four, five or six lines required more skill in reading music notation (whether mensural or tablature) and contrapuntal improvisation. Hence *frottole*, particularly those of the favoured Tromboncino and Cara, were performed well after the composers' deaths. The 1561 biography of Irene di Spilimbergo, *Vita della Signora Irene* by Dionigi Atanagi, attests to the lasting influence of Tromboncino, extending from both his school of singing and lute performance which he had established for gentlewomen in Venice in the 1520s, and from his own enduring compositions.

> As to what Signora Irene learned by way of playing and singing to the lute, the harpsichord, and the viol; and how on each of these instruments, far beyond the usual custom and intellect of women, she approximated the very best masters in these arts, I say nothing, for it would lead too far. I shall say only that in a short time, being taught by Gazza, a musician of no small renown in Venice, she learned a vast number of madrigals, odes, and Latin verse, to be recited to the accompaniment of the lute, and that she

> recited them in such a striking, delicate, and melodious manner that the greatest connoisseurs were amazed. After finally acknowledging, from the singing of a pupil of Tromboncino, the most perfect master of our city, that this way of singing was fuller and more delicate than any other, she learned and sang many of his compositions without other teaching than the guidance of her natural instinct and her own judgment, and she did so with as much grace and delicacy as the pupils of the aforementioned master themselves. (Atanagi *Vita della Signora Irene*; in Einstein 1949, I:50).

In the 1550s, forty years after Petrucci's publications of Tromboncino's works, his songs were still being sung, perhaps with the aid of still circulating copies of Bossinensis' arrangements or the composer's own manuscripts (for it is reasonable to assume Irene and her teacher Gazza had some written educational tools), but more importantly passed on by students of Tromboncino himself who transmitted the melodies and lute accompaniments orally.

While the familiar *frottola* remained a staple of lute song repertoire well into the sixteenth century, by the third decade the attention of lutenist singers began to turn toward a new polyphonic genre which was quickly becoming the most popular and socially important secular vocal music—the madrigal. In spite of the evidence of extant sixteenth-century iconography, literature and musicprints which allude to multiple performance styles, the Italian madrigal has historically been viewed and is still commonly thought of today exclusively as a sung *a cappella* genre. Scholarly attention to compositional form and style, based upon the predominant existence of compositions published in partbook format, has allowed the view of nineteenth century historians that "nearly all the music written before 1600 was vocal music (*a cappella*)" to proliferate into the twentieth, and even twenty-first centuries, particularly in popular understanding (Apel 1953, xxi). During the early music performance revival of the 1960s and especially in the 1970s with the emergence of such internationally acclaimed vocal groups such as the Hilliard Ensemble, the Tallis Scholars and The Sixteen, the idea of the voices-only madrigal was embedded in Western musical expectations and inflated by the rise of amateur madrigal choirs in schools and colleges across Europe and North America, many of them based on the enduring male choral tradition of English cathedrals and university chapels. Only more recently has scholarship in performance practice begun to question and debate this now-entrenched position.[15] Yet the references to Renaissance performance practice of the Italian madrigal reveal ample evidence of an equally strong performing tradition of the madrigal as a combined instrumental and vocal consort song or lute song.

Denis Stevens states that the advent of the popular madrigal triggered the demise of lute-accompanied songs: "the tremendous vogue of the madrigal in all its forms and aspects soon banished the humble *frottola* from the musical scene in Italy. Banished too was the hope of an Italian school of lutenist song-writers, for the only material available for lutenists during the middle years of the century was the kind of publication that Francis [Bossinensis] had started in 1509: intabulations of polyphonic compositions with one or more parts missing" (Stevens 1960, 102). Stevens incorrectly assumes that the rise of the madrigal ousted lute song performance, ignoring the fact that the continuing practice of publishers to print madrigals with lute intabulation precisely in the style of the Bossinensis lute books confirmed popular lute-accompanied performance. Stevens also overlooks evidence of the ability of singer-lutenists to perform from mensural prints, although elsewhere in his discussion he acknowledges that publishers "issued books of songs with the voice part in ordinary staff notation and the accompaniment in tablature" throughout the sixteenth century (Stevens 1960, 69).

Many of the madrigalists of sixteenth-century Italy were in fact accomplished lutenists and singers; while their music for four or five *a cappella* voices has historically received the most attention, they were at the same time composing and publishing *villanesche*, *canzonette* and *balletti*, as well as madrigals adapted for lute-accompanied solo performance. The publishing trends of the sixteenth century, revelatory of the growing bourgeois demand for printed music, undeniably attest to the immense popularity of the Italian madrigal in its four- or five-voice partbook form; yet they in no way indicate the attenuation of a lute song performance practice. One cannot fault the generations of scholars whose hard work has brought the polyphonic madrigal back into the most common of vocal repertories; yet existing complementarily alongside the *a cappella* madrigal emphasized by scholarly historicism as the focal point of Renaissance secular vocal music, to the near-exclusion of every other genre and stylistic practice, was the madrigal as Italian lute song.

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[15] See Page, 1992, for example.

Lute intabulations of popular madrigals first occurred in 1536, and began to appear with increasing frequency from the 1540s on. Although as Krummel and Agee have both pointed out, we must be cautious when attributing popular practice to printing conventions, especially in the examination of part books, the enduring performance practice of the lute song can be substantiated to some extent by the continued publication of popular songs in both mensural notation and lute tablature.[16] The first collection of madrigals printed with lute tablature was published in Venice by Ottaviano Scotto, and consisted of 22 madrigals collected from Verdelot's *Primo libro di madrigali*, and arranged for solo voice with lute accompaniment by Adriano Willaert. The lute intabulations followed rapidly on the heels of mensural partbook printing, for Verdelot's first two volumes of four-voice madrigals had been printed in Venice only in 1533 and 1534. The initial works of this leading early madrigalist quickly became immensely popular, requiring a single-volume edition of his first two books to be issued in 1540 and reprinted many times in the following 25 years. The very first collection of pieces to bear the title 'madrigal,' containing works by the Flemish Verdelot, Maistre Jhan de Ferrara and Costanzo Festa and entitled *Madrigali de diversi musici: libro primo de la Serena*, was published in Rome only in 1530. The lute intabulations of Verdelot's most popular first madrigals were published in 1536, and again in 1540 as *Intavolatura de li madrigali di Verdelotto da cantare et sonare nel lauto, intavolati per Messer Adriano* (Venice: Ottaviano Scotto). This volume was soon followed by lute intabulations of madrigals by Arcadelt, in 1540, and the practice of publishing the same madrigals simultaneously in both mensural partbook editions and lute song collections, or with lute intabulation included in the soprano partbook, continued throughout the century.

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[16] Donald Krummel argues that while "printed partbooks are collectively our most important source for the music" of the Renaissance, "to see them individually as a specific index of musical taste during their period . . . is indeed problematical" (1976, 336); See also Agee 1998, chapter five, "The Acquisition of Music and Musical Taste."

This publishing convention encompassed both the polyphonic madrigal and other strophic genres such as the *canzonetta* and *villanesca*, offering a wide repertoire to vocal soloists. Ruth Lakeway and Robert C. White comment that "throughout the sixteenth century most of the polyphonic forms of vocal music in Italy and other countries had been published in two versions: one for several voices and the other for solo performance with lute or keyboard accompaniment. The Italian *frottola*, the Spanish *villancico*, the French *chanson*, the German polyphonic *Lied*, and the English madrigal, ayre and lute song were all published in this manner, and many other songs were written expressly for performance by soloists" (Lakeway and White 1989, 2). Stevens, Hanning, and Haar echo Lakeway and White's summation, acknowledging that two forms of publication, one in SATB score or partbooks and one containing a solo vocal line and lute tablature, existed side by side in Italian Renaissance printing (Haar 2001, Stevens 1960, Hanning 1989). Only late in the second half of the *cinquecento*, when publishers began to focus more on single author editions than on collections of madrigals, did the printing of songs for voice and lute deviate from the duplication of mensural prints and instead take its own path in the continued publication of collections of the most popular works by multiple composers. Girolamo Scotto's 1584 publication of *Il primo libro de intavolatura da liuto, de motetti ricercate madrigale, et canzonette alla napolitana, a tre, et quattro voci, per cantare, et sonare*, which includes madrigals and other songs by Ferabosco, Gabrieli, Orlando di Lasso, Marenzio, Philippe de Monte, Striggio, Rore, and others, is a typical collection of the most popular madrigals arranged for lute and voice from late in the century.

The publication of intabulated madrigals *da cantare et sonare nel lauto* is not the only evidence of a continuing lute song performance practice throughout the century. Significant contemporary treatises and dialogues on music performance illustrate the flourishing existence of the lute song. Antonfrancesco Doni's *Dialogo della musica* (1544) describes amateur musical evenings in Piacenza and Venice where songs were performed alternately by a few singers on each part, by soloists singing to lute or viol accompaniment, or as poetic recitation with instrumental backing. Doni's descriptions and anecdotes are interspersed with examples from the *cantus* part of the madrigals and motets he is discussing, making it a very informative anthology. In addition, eyewitness descriptions detail the use of madrigals in academies and courts, especially as part of dramatic performances held at private celebrations or public festivals, where the madrigal as a lute song is prevalent. The 1539 wedding of Cosimo de' Medici to Eleanora of Toledo at Florence saw madrigals written on mythological themes, elaborately staged and costumed and set within the text or between the acts of plays. The madrigals were performed by soloists and choruses, all accompanied by various combinations of instruments from a single lute to an exciting assortment of strings, winds and brass, as witnessed by notes in the partbooks, drawings of the scenes and commemorative festival books. The 1539 Medici wedding was followed by ever more extravagant spectacles, including the Florentine weddings of 1565 and 1589, and the madrigal performed as lute song or consort song became entrenched as the basis of the dramatic *intermedi* in Italian festival culture.

The adoption of partbook format as the most widely employed method of music publication during the bulk of the sixteenth century, as well as the rapid and immense growth of the Italian madrigal, points to the importance of equal-voice polyphony in Renaissance musical development. Yet a tradition of chordal thinking surrounded the Italian lute song which affected the adoption of the contrapuntal madrigal into lute song repertoire. In very early accompanied monody, as in the recitation of lais or epics with added harp, drum or fiddle by the *cantastorie* of late Medieval Italy, the instrumental parts primarily added harmonic texture and defined the rhythmic structure of the song.[17] The fifteenth-century Italian lutenist-improvisors worked from this same principle, so that the written *frottola* which developed out of this improvised tradition is characterized by a predominant melody in the soprano voice with two or three accompanying voices, as are other genres related to improvised monody, such as the Italian *trecento* madrigal and the

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[17] See Lawrence-King 1992 and Page 1982.

Burgundian chanson.[18]

In the early sixteenth century, the tradition of chordal thinking continued to develop alongside the emergence of contrapuntal polyphony. Mainly influential among Spanish vihuelists and guitar players, it nevertheless influenced the thinking of Italian lutenists, and was compounded by the predominance of the harmonically directional fourths and fifths in the accompanying tenor and bass parts of a typical *frottola*, which also encouraged singer-lutenists to follow the music vertically as much as horizontally. Chordal music notation for the Spanish guitar known as *alfabeto* consisted of a system of chord symbols and rhythm signs and existed in the sixteenth century alongside tablature for polyphonic writing. Andrew Lawrence-King also points to the dissemination of Renaissance 'tenors' or simple harmonic sequences found all over Europe —"the descending tetrachord of passacaglia; the three chord trick of bergamazca ('In an English country garden'); the longer sequence, passamezzo ('Greensleeves') and many more"— and cites their popularity as "both a cause and a symptom of the increasing tendency of improvising musicians to think chordally rather than polyphonically" in the sixteenth century (Lawrence-King 1992, 360). The lute song thrived on this enduring acceptance of the chordally-accompanied solo song, and chordal influence can been seen in the *frottola* and the Spanish-influenced *canzone napoletana*; yet the increasing complexity of Renaissance polyphony, particularly in the blossoming contrapuntal madrigal, required a completely different attitude toward the adaptation of popular secular vocal music for lute and voice performance, one in which each voice was equally important.

In his examination of lute song tablatures from 1570 to 1603, Kevin Mason identifies three overlapping phases of accompaniment style (Mason 1997, 95-107). The first and most predominant style, which Mason describes as 'straight', is one in which the vocal model is arranged literally, after the manner of earlier *frottola* intabulations. The lute accompaniment faithfully reproduces all, or in some cases only the lower vocal lines, omitting voices or notes only when necessary and adding minimal ornamentation. Mason terms the second phase, common from the 1580s on, 'free intabulation.' This accompaniment style presents a less literal, modified arrangement of the vocal polyphony, which may include transposition or omission of voice parts, rhythmic simplification, and the addition of cadential suspensions, harmonic filler or new counterpart. Typically the bass line and vocal cantus were maintained, while modifications were made to the inner parts. It is a short step from this style to the third phase which features an accompaniment composed above the bass voice part without duplicating the voice-leading or texture of the vocal model. Mason notes that this third style is the most rare in late-sixteenth-century intabulations; but an arrangement which favours a free chordal accompaniment above the bass line is indicative of accompaniments that could be 'realized' from a bass partbook (a common unwritten practice) while foreshadowing early seventeenth-century basso continuo accompaniment.

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[18] For this relationship see Lawrence-King 1992; Haar 1986b *Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance*.

"The idea of a solo song with instrumental accompaniment is so familiar to us that we take it for granted, as indeed most Renaissance listeners would have done," writes Lawrence-King (1992, 355). But our modern understanding of 'accompaniment', with its connotations of a powerful musical hegemony exercised by the soloist over the subordinate accompaniment, is misleading and inappropriate for much sixteenth-century polyphonic music. In Renaissance polyphony as practised by the leading madrigalists, each voice is ideally of equal importance, and the "lute, harp or keyboard is actually a replacement for a missing voice, possibly for several voices. The ideal that the accompanist strives for is the perfect imitation of the human voice on each of the individual polyphonic lines of his part" (Lawrence-King 1992, 355). Since every voice in a polyphonic madrigal was considered equal and all were texted, a singer-lutenist could theoretically choose to sing any of the four or five parts, realizing the others on his or her instrument, and the ultimate meaning and balance of the song would not be displaced. Kevin Mason notes that "all of the sixteenth-century lute song sources suggest that polyphony demanded an accompaniment in which one duplicated as faithfully as possible the texture and voice leading of the vocal model" (Mason 1997, 95). This often involved aligning the pitch level of the lute to that of the vocalist, or in the case of more complex polyphony, using additional lutes to fill out the accompaniment, especially in ensemble vocal music.

The majority of lute intabulations which include separate mensural notation for the vocal soloist follow Bossinensis' example of preserving the *cantus* to be sung and reducing the other parts to lute tablature. In his arrangement of 14 madrigals by composers including Orlando di Lasso, Palestrina, Ferretti, Giacomini, Striggio and Wert, Vincenzo Galilei, however, retains the bass line with text in mensural notation, placing lute intabulation of the other parts on the facing page (MS *Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Landau-Finaly Mus. 2*. c.1568-84). Claude Palisca suggests that Galilei's preference for singing the bass line and performing the others instrumentally was not merely a matter of convenience in terms of the vocal range (Vincenzo was probably a baritone), but rather conforms to his belief that "the bass voice was the one that gave a contrapuntal composition its 'air'" (Palisca 1977, 214). Galilei expresses this opinion in both his *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna* (Florence, 1581) and *Il primo libro della prattica del contrapunto* (1589-1591), in which he firmly states: "It is to be understood that the lowest part, and not the tenor, as it pleases Zarlino, is that which reigns and governs and gives the air to the composition; and wherever the bass part does not vary its notes, the composition is not varied, or only little varied" (in Palisca 1977, 214). Galilei's derivation from the norm is echoed in an undated lutebook in the *Biblioteca Statale* at Lucca, *Mus. Ms. 774: Intavolatura di leuto da sonare e cantare*; among the dance tunes collected around 1595-97, it contains fourteen texted *arie*, 3 of which have mensural lines for bass voice on non-adjacent folios to the lute tablature. Printed editions by Terzi and Besard as well as several manuscript collections also feature texted bass lines (either in mensural parts or texted intabulations).[19]

The largest source of songs for bass voice with lute is found in the Cavalcanti lute book, which contains seventy-one texted intabulations, including thirty-two pieces by Orazio Vecchi, "the most frequently represented composer in the Italian lute song repertory at the end of the sixteenth century and the dominant figure in the bass solo song repertory with lute accompaniment" (Mason 1997, 93). The intabulation of lute songs for bass voice may be a tribute to several prominent bass soloists of the latter sixteenth century: Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, Alessandro Merlo (a Roman who sang bass with a range of 22 notes) and Giovanni Andrea are all mentioned by Giustiniani as well known and inspiring bass *virtuosi* of the Italian courts.

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[19] Mason includes the Cavalcanti, Landau-Finaly, Haslemere, Lucca and Montreal manuscripts in this list (Mason 1997, 93).

Other lute song arrangements offer a choice of vocal line, while emphasising the equality of parts in vocal polyphony: Simone Verovio's publications of *canzonette* (Rome, 1586 [rpt. 1590 and 1592]; Rome, 1589; Rome, 1591 [rpt. 1597]; Rome 1595) display three voice parts on the left-hand page and tablature reduction of the accompanying parts on the right-hand page, allowing the performer to choose which voice part to sing. Three northern publications of Italian songs edited by Emanuel Adriaensen, all in choirbook format —*Pratum musicum* . . . (Antwerp, 1584), *Novum pratum musicum* . . . (Antwerp, 1592), and *Pratum musicum* . . . (Antwerp, 1600)— contain an astonishing variety of arrangements: 51 madrigals with French lute tablature and SB voice parts in mensural notation, 3 madrigals for two lutes with SSB voice parts, one *napolitane* for four lutes with SATB voices, 12 *napolitane* for lute with STB voices, one with SATB voices, and 2 with SB voices, and 6 villanellas and 9 *balletti* for lute with SB & STB voice parts. Mason notes that "either or both of the vocal parts [in Adriaesen's arrangements] could be accompanied by the intabulation with convincing results. Galilei's, Verovio's and Adriaensen's arrangements neatly demonstrate the flexibility of vocal or instrumental interpretation of the multiple lines of Italian polyphony. Their choices are, however, the exception to a practice that otherwise indicates a preference for the soprano line as the most effective melodic vehicle for the text. Lakeway and White observe that in the majority of Renaissance vocal polyphony "the emphasis was on the top melodic line. The other voices were written out and could be performed by instruments or by other voices, but the texture was basically polyphonic even when it was in chordal structure; and although the melody was in the top voice, all the voices were equal in importance" (Lakeway and White 1989, 2).

Although outlining his preference for bass soloists in the *Fronimo* examples, elsewhere Galilei conforms to the popular preference, advocating vocal performance of the soprano line by a soprano or tenor:

> For example in singing an air such as *Come t'ahggio lasciato vita mia*, I say that when the soprano is sung to an instrument that plays all the parts, this is called singing *proschorda*; and to sing more parts is called *synphonon* or "in harmony." The greater the number of parts that sing at one time, the less will the air be grasped by the sense and the less efficaciously will its character work upon the souls of those who listen to it. It will also turn out well if such a soprano is sung by a tenor. (Vincenzo Galilei, *Dubbi intorno a quanto io ho detto dell'uso dell'enharmonio con la solutione di essi*, 1591; in Palisca 1977, 216).

Despite the theoretical insistence on equal-voiced polyphony by many Renaissance composers, compositional and performance practice found it hard to evade the musical hierarchy construed by lute song performance practice, which had for decades positioned the cantus as the dominant melody line in the soprano. The new humanist ideas of Vincenzo Galilei, Giovanni de' Bardi, Giulio Caccini and Girolamo Mei in the 1570s re-emphasized this early ideal, encouraging a move toward composition which favoured a highly melodic *cantus* with more chordal harmonic accompaniment. In his reappraisal of the Camerata Fiorentina, Claude Palisca describes the most characteristic songs associated with the Camerata's ideology as featuring "the suppression of all melodic interest in the accompanying part that would compete with the expressive contours of the voice" and the "concentration of interest in a single melodic line" (Palisca 1972b, 232-233). With the adoption of these humanist ideals in music composition, the end of the century saw a return to favour of the accompanied solo song, albeit in a new dramatic context and with a change in instrumentation.

The second half of the sixteenth century saw the stylistic repertory of the lute song not only embrace the contrapuntal madrigal, but also adopt many 'lighter' genres which were coming back in style, or were newly in vogue. Arthur J. Ness writes that "at this time large numbers of canzonettas, villanellas and *napolitane* for one or more voices with lute were published at Venice by Gardane, Scotto and Vincenti, including books devoted to works of I. Tromboncino, Gastoldi, Orazio Vecchi, Marenzio and many others" (Ness

2001, 41). A typical collection of lute songs from 1584 reveals that these genres were equally, if not more important to the 'gentleman' singer-lutenist as the madrigal: Girolamo Scotto's publication of intabulations for voice and lute by Gabriel Fallamero, a *gentilhuomo allessandrino*, contains among its 46 pieces several works by prominent madrigalists including Andrea Gabrieli, Orlando di Lasso, Luca Marenzio, Alessandro Striggio and Cipriano de Rore. However, the collection includes not just madrigals but also motets, *canzonette*, *napolitana* and ricercares (*Il primo libro de intavolatura da liuto, de motetti ricercate madrigale, et canzonette alla napolitana, a tre, et quattro voci, per cantare, et sonare* . . . Venezia: G. Scotto, 1584). Mason notes that from the 1570s, "the Italian lute song repertory . . . is dominated by settings of light strophic poetry: villanellas or *napolitane*, canzonettas, *arie* and *balletti*" (Mason 1997, 83). While lute song arrangements of madrigals continue to be produced, three- and four-part strophic songs in a predominantly homophonic texture began to be written and published in much greater numbers; many of the principal madrigalists of the day contributed to this lighter form of lute song.

The adoption of both the madrigal and its lighter offshoots for lute song performance influenced the various combinations of genres which tempered the contrapuntal madrigal, resulting in such hybrids as the canzonetta-madrigal and the madrigal arioso. In his 1628 *Discorso sopra la msuica de' suoi tempi*, Vincenzo Giustiniani looks back to the year 1575 ("or slightly later") for the beginnings of what he termed "a new manner of singing . . . with a solo voice over an instrument"— a style which resulted in the composition of "various villanelle in a style intermediate between madrigals in contrapuntal style and villanelle" (Giustiniani 1962, 69). These 'lighter' genres, often only three- or four-part in arrangement, like the famous *canzone napolitana* sung by Orlando di Lasso to lute accompaniment in an intermedi during the wedding festivities of Duke William of Bavaria and Renée of Lorraine in 1568, were more easily adaptable to lute-accompanied solo singing than the larger polyphonic madrigal, and appear frequently in printed lute song collections. In fact, many songs were undoubtedly written intentionally for lute song performance, and only later published in STB or SATB form. The *canzone villanesche alla napolitana*, which were immensely popular in the second half of the century and appeared in published collections from 1537, were direct descendents of the earliest improvised lute songs. "The *villanesca* literature," writes Cardamone, "can be described as soloistic, a continuation of the unwritten tradition carried on by the *citaredi* or self-accompanying popular singer" (Cardamone 1990, 59). With its popular melodic air situated in the soprano, and simple homorhythmic harmonization in the lower two or three parts, the strophic *villanesca* once again allowed lutenists to think of the accompanying parts in chordal terms. Vincenzo Galilei describes this distinguishing feature of the *villanesca* style, saying, "this occurs when a soloist sings to an instrument in which are struck at the same time several strings disposed in such a way that they make various consonances among themselves, but in a manner uniform with the tones of the soloist, with which they thus become all of a single and one same sound" (in Cardamone 1990, 64). These songs offer direct evidence of a continuous lute song tradition.

One of the integral elements of the lute song which remained influential to all music genres within sixteenth-century Italy was the practice of improvisation and embellishment. Improvised ornamentation was a facet of lute song performance that attached itself to every form of solo singing, from the humble *frottola* to the exalted virtuoso *madrigale arioso*. Such spontaneous embellishment was central to the early lute song of the fifteenth-century *canterini*, whose pieces often appeared in the "highly elaborate and florid" style of the popular "Justiniane" or "Viniziane" (Prizer 1980, 4). Walter Rubsamen comments from his examination of surviving descriptions that "it appears probable that improvisators of the late fifteenth century made the rhapsodic ornamentation of a simple melodic line an integral part of their performance" (Rubsamen 1964, 53). Certain pieces in Petrucci's *Frottole Libro VI* (1506) have been singled out as evidence of this earlier practice, as they contain written-out improvisations which embellish the pauses at the phrase-ends of the *strambotti* linked to the *Justiniani* tradition.

Improvisatory elements from the oral tradition associated with the lute song continued to dominate the genre even with the development of music publishing, and are noticeably tied to lute technique. "A common thread that runs throughout the history of lute playing is the improvisatory skill of the great performers," write Crawford and Poulton (2001, 351). "For this reason, most of the repertory was probably never written down. Lute playing was passed on by individual tuition, and many lute manuscripts were compiled by teachers for their pupils, and supplemented (sometimes somewhat inexpertly) from memory by the pupils" (Crawford and Poulton 2001, 351). This oral tradition was inherent in the teaching and performance not only of instrumental lute music, but also in the incorporation of spontaneous ornamentation within the performance practice of the Italian lute song. Written-out examples of a type of melismatic embellishment in both the lute and voice parts assumed to be a common element of the *frottola* and its improvised forebears can be seen as early as the Bossinensis lute books (1509 & 1511), and a hand-copied version of the lute book of Vincenzo Capirola, written out in 1517 by the lutenist Vitali, adds ornament signs and gives a description of how they are to be played in his notes at the beginning of the book.

Throughout the sixteenth century the idea of ornamentation grew from this early practice to a specific musical concept engendering its own theories, treatises and arguments. The first ornamentation tutor, Silvestro Ganassi's *Il Fontegara* (1535), was written for recorders, but could easily be applied to any instrument or voice, while specific examples of lute embellishment can be seen in Italian, German and Spanish lute books, including the second printing (Milan: 1548) of the *Intavolatura di Lauto dell Divino Francesco da Milano et dell'eccelente Pietro Paolo Borrono.*[20] Treatises and tutors specifically devoted to vocal diminution did not appear until later in the century, and the best known were published near the end of the *cinquecento.* Girolama dalla Casa's *Il Vero modo di diminuir* (1584), Giovvani Battista Bovicelli's *Regole Passaggi di musica* (1594), Ludovico Zacconi's *Prattica di musica* (1596), Bassano's *Ricercate, passaggi, et candentie* (1598), and Giulio Caccini's *Nuove Musiche* (1602) all give excellent accounts of contemporary embellishment practice; dalla Casa's treatise particularly emphasises that his ornamentation is to be used for singing to lute accompaniment as well as singing in ensembles. However, an appreciation for the art of vocal ornamentation is in evidence long before these specific tutors.

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[20] See Poulton 1975.

In 1552, Adrian Petit Coclico devotes a lengthy passage of his *Compendium musices* to "Refinement and Ornamentation, or Pronunciation in Singing." He first advises "the young boy wishing to learn the art [of singing]," to find a teacher "who, by natural instinct, sings beautifully and smoothly and makes music beautiful by ornamenting his phrases" (in MacClintock 1979, 30-31). He then writes out a number of examples of suitable *passaggi* or *elegantia* which turn a "simple," "ordinary," or "plain" melody into one that is "elegant" and "colored," transforming a "raw" phrase into one served "with condiments" as "meat seasoned with salt and mustard" (in MacClintock 1979, 32-33). A different approach to vocal ornamentation is seen in the *Lettere* of Giovanni Camillo Maffei (1562), a physician, philosopher and accomplished musician who discusses the physiology of singing and a style of vocal ornamentation which he calls "cantar di gorga o di garganta" (in MacClintock 1979, 37).

Coclico's demonstration of vocal diminutions was echoed by Nicola Vicentino (1555), who insisted that the singer must add ornamentation to the written work only when it is appropriate to the text:

> If he will use such ways, he will be judged by auditors who are men of judgement to have many styles of singing and demonstrate that he has an abundant and rich store of manners of singing by the disposition of *gorgia*, or diminutions, together with the compositions, according to the *passaggi* appropriate to them. But there are some singers who, when they sing, demonstrate to their hearers their lack of judgement and consideration when they encounter a passage that is serious and sing it in a lively manner, and then, on the contrary, they sing an animated passage in a sad manner. (In MacClintock 1979, 77).

Vicentino delineates three styles of performance commonly practised in Renaissance Italy —a vocal soloist accompanied by multiple instruments, a singer-lutenist performing in the style of a lute song, and a chorus singing without the aid of instrumental doubling— and advocates embellishment in any style of performance but with clear rules for each method:

> in order that the harmony not be lost and that the good arrangement of the

> diminution may be demonstrated by the singer, it will be more satisfactory if, during the diminution, for the instruments that are playing the piece play it as it is notated, without embellishments, so that the harmony cannot be lost with the diminution, for the instruments will keep the consonances in their proper form. And as to those who wish to embellish a composition singing and playing together, if both do not make the same diminutions at the same time they will sound well together. Then in the compositions which are sung without instruments, the diminutions will be good in compositions for more than four voices, because wherever a consonance is lacking, the other part will have it in the octave or unison and there will not be a poverty of harmony. (In MacClintock 1979, 77)

From the early examples of embellished *frottole* to Vicentino's admonishments to Caccini's detailed tutor, the ornamentation of both vocal line and lute accompaniment remained a standard practice, one that unified the lute song performance across the century.

Some of the most convincing evidence of a continuing practice of lute song performance lies in Cosimo Bottegari's unique collection of 1574-1600, MS *Modena Biblioteca Estense C 311*.[21] Cosimo Bottegari was born in 1554 and grew up in Florence, where he likely received a musical education in the tradition of Florentine lutenist-composers who still recognized the impact of frottolists such as Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Marchetto Cara. He served at the court of Bavaria from 1573 to 1575 where he was ennobled by Duke Albert as a *gentilhuomo della camera*. Returning to Florence in 1579, Bottegari was attached for many years to the court of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. A consummate business man, Bottegari was not a salaried musician of the Florentine court, but rather received a horse, its stabling and food in return for his courtly attendance and services rendered. Several of his own compositions are dedicated to the Grand Duchess Bianco Cappello, and other ladies of her court, including a setting of a poem by Isabella de' Medici, sister of Francesco I; yet these should likely be viewed as the offerings of a courtier and gentleman musician pleasantly contributing to the cultural life of his social circle, rather than the ingratiating works of a musician seeking noble patronage.

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[21] An excellent modern edition exists in *The Bottegari Lutebook*, ed. Carol MacClintock. Wellesley, Mass., 1965.

Bottegari's collection is a meticulous record of his own compositions, complete with written-out ornamentation, as well as his favourite works by various popular composers. The well-worn manuscript, laid out in six systems of two staves on each page, the upper of five lines in mensural notation for the vocal part, chiefly in soprano clef, and the lower in six lines for lute tablature, displays a telling overview of the Italian lute song in all its various guises. The collection contains 131 items, with arrangements of polyphonic pieces including the most popular madrigals and chansons of his day, sacred compositions, untexted *arie* for use with poetic recitation, representative pieces from the lighter genres such as *canzonette*, *villanelle* and *napoletane*, a handful of lute solos, and a large number of works which MacClintock simply calls lute songs—pieces composed in the new monodic style of the Florentine court of the 1570s for voice with lute accompaniment of a combined chordal and contrapuntal nature. The pieces also range in date of composition from the very earliest part of the century to the most up-to-date musical developments. The popular homophonic genres —which include among the several *canzonette, napoletane* and *villanelle*, an old goliard song, a *mascherata*, and a teutonic *todesca* or drinking song— display the diverse geographic and demographic roots of lute songs. These popular songs were recorded with the earliest written *frottole* of the late fifteenth century and maintained a place in sixteenth-century practice. In a similar manner, the formulaic melodies or *arie* recorded by Bottegari bring the tradition of the fifteenth-century *improvisatore* into the next century. In addition, MacClintock has characterized the melodies of the *laude* as "simple" and "traditional" and has identified at least one *lauda* as a *canto carnascialesco* which appeared in collections of *laude* of 1485, 1510 and 1512 (MacClintock 1956, 184).

Amid these surviving favourites from former days, Bottegari transcribes several complex polyphonic works by the most popular madrigalists of recent decades: *Ancor che col partire* by Cipriano de Rore, *Vestiva i colli* by Giovanni Palestrina, Lasso's, *Madonna il vostro petto* and *Nasce la pena mia* by Alessandro Striggio, *Susanne un jour*, *Appariran per me le stelle*, and *Timor et tremor* by Orlando di Lasso, and *O sacrum convivium* by Giaches Wert, all grace the pages of Bottegari's manuscript. These works are recorded in elaborate arrangements which preserve the cantus intact with text and intabulate the other three or four parts, maintaining the polyphonic texture as faithfully as possible, with minimal omission of the inner voice parts in some unavoidable situations. Bottegari's own compositions, along with those of a little-known Venetian composer, Hippolito Tromboncino, and one aria by the young Giulio Caccini, bring his collection into the very forefront of musical stylistic development. The lute song retained a steady, if unrecognized, influence on even the most prominent innovations in musical thought and style. Bottegari lived and worked in Florence where contemporary composers such as Peri and Caccini were advancing the madrigal's usage as an accompanied solo song alongside their invention of a new form of monody which employed figured bass accompaniment. Bottegari immersed himself in this "nuove musiche," and half of his sixty-six pieces are lute songs in the style of the new monody, with an eloquent soprano vocal line accompanied by contrasting chords and figuration on the lute.

The Bottegari lute book encompasses the wide range of the Italian lute song from its earliest beginnings in the improvised tradition and *frottola*, through the mid-century's infatuation with the polyphonic madrigal and popular strophic, chord-accompanied songs, to the emerging 'new' monody of the Fiorentina Camerata, ably demonstrating an enduring and continuous tradition of lute song performance. It also demonstrates how we can view the lute song as a distinct performance-based genre-system, one which encompasses diverse musical forms, stylistic trends, and poetic fashions and brings together disparate time periods and geographical centres, within a single repository. The defining factor of performance practice that unifies the collection, while overlooked by modern formal generic determinants, was recognized as a familiar, even customary, element in its day. As our investigation has illustrated, working from the perspective of performance within the framework of the Italian lute song has allowed questions of social practice to be examined alongside elements of formal genres, resulting in a fuller understanding of both the process and product of Renaissance music and performance, and the social meaning they possess.

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Chapter Six

Gendered Lute Song Performance and the Courtesan Tradition

In an introduction to Mary Eagleton's essay "Genre and Gender," David Duff writes, "the connections between genre and gender are one of the most fruitful areas of investigation to have emerged from the feminist revolution in literary studies. . . . Explaining exactly how these two concepts interrelate, or establishing clear criteria by which a genre might be said to be 'gendered' has, however, proved more difficult" (in Eagleton 2000, 250). Utilising the category of performance as a defining factor of genre, as we have done with the Italian lute song, provides a means to establish the gender associations of this particular genre-system. As Cook declares, "a more direct route to understanding music as performance [and, by inference, as performance genres] might be to focus on the functioning of the performing body, both in itself and in relation to the other dimensions of the performance event" (Cook 2001, 17).

In the case of female performers, the study of the gendered performing body naturally opens up questions of cultural gender ideology and subject construction in performance, a topic which has been ably addressed by recent feminist scholars.[1] With increasing authority throughout the sixteenth century, the Italian lute song became a popular and recognized genre for women's performance, as evidenced in literature, personal letters and portraiture. An examination of the lute song's antithetical relationship to the male polyphonic madrigal, and the various roles of the female lute song performer, their function in academies, salons and courts, in both confirmation and subversion of contemporary ideas and societal roles of women, will reveal a strong interconnection between female performance, the lute song as a genre, and contemporary gender ideology. Jim Samson concludes his *New Grove* definition of genre by saying, "the recognition that a social element can participate in both the definition and the function of genre releases its energy and confirms its continuing value for our culture" (Samson 2001, 657). A performance-oriented genre-system allows us to recognize the social aspect of gender as a culturally constructed category which impacted the continuing evolution and transformation of the Italian Renaissance lute song.

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[1] See Abbate 1991 & 1993, Austern 1993, 1989, 1998 & 1999, Cusick 1993, 1994a, & 1994c, Gordon 1999, McClary 1991, Riley 1985, Treadwell 1997; see also chapter four, "Hearing the Female Voice," for a discussion of the performing body in relation to the female voice.

Women's Lute Song Performance — A Continuous Tradition

Descriptions of female solo performance to lute accompaniment exist throughout and surpass the boundaries of the sixteenth century. The early accounts of the Italian lute song are centred at the courts of northern Italy, where singing and lute playing was long considered a respectable pursuit for noblewomen. The fifteenth-century Milanese noblewomen Valentina Visconti, Beatrice di Tenda (d. 1418), Ippolita Sforza (d. 1488), and Beatrice d'Este (1475-1497), for instance, all played the lute and sang, and one of the earliest references to a female musician in the court of Milan refers to lutenist Caterina Toschana, who during the 1470s requested 12 lute strings "of a particular kind or quality not easily available" in Milan (Merkley 1999, 167); it is not known whether Caterina was a professional lutenist-singer employed as a musician at court, perhaps performing in the manner of the popular poet-improvisors of northern Italy, or an accomplished court lady retained as a member of the Duchess of Milan's household. An early laudatory description of an unknown female singer and lutenist is found in a late fifteenth-century letter from courtier Stefano Cremona to the young Milanese ducal secretary Agostino Calco. Cremona extols the musical skill of a lady he has recently heard in the duchy of Ferrara, perhaps one of the Este princesses or ladies-in-waiting: "When you come [to Belriguardo, the Este summer palace near Ferrara], I want, some evening, to have you hear the most delicate thing you have ever heard, and signor Aluisio da Corte did not exaggerate to me: the hand and the voice of a gallant lady" (in Merkley 1999, 412). Descriptions of the musical skill of the Este women abound, and their example set the standard for women's lute song performance throughout the century.[2] The northern duchesses' musical involvement at the beginning of the century, with their emphasis on secular vocal music and stringed instruments, served to affix a gendered connotation upon the Italian lute song. While they employed both male and female singer-lutenists in professional musical roles and as courtiers, it was their own performances that paved the way for a future of women who sang and played the lute, especially within the upper classes of Italian society.

In her informative study of Tarquinia Molza, Joanne Riley deplores the lack of attention given to women's self-accompanied solo performance of the courtly *frottola*. "Women's role as principal performers of this style," she writes, "is rarely acknowledged by historians. But it is abundantly clear from sixteenth-century sources that proficiency in secular song performance was a required part of the noble female role" (Riley 1985, 472). Women's lute song performance in fact enjoyed a continuous tradition right through the sixteenth century. As recorded in portraits, descriptive accounts and musical asides, women from countesses to courtesans, actresses to bourgeois housewives all performed the popular songs of the day to lute accompaniment in various situations and settings. From the early part of the century we find descriptions of ladies in the entourage of Duchess Lucrezia Borgia of Ferrara performing for the private entertainment of her personal court. The lady Graziosa Pia, for instance, was much favoured for her singing and lute playing, while Madonna Dalida Puti, who joined Lucrezia's court around 1507 and later became the mistress of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, sang during many *feste* including several elaborate Ferrarese banquets held in 1529. Dalida Puti also performed in various elaborate combinations of voices and instruments, such as during a banquet of January 24, when, "during the first course, a composition by Alfonso della Viola was performed, sung by Madonna Dalida and four others and [accompanied] by Alfonso with five companions, played by five viols, a harpsichord with two stops, a lute, and a bass and tenor recorder" (Messisbugo, *Banchetti, composizioni di vivande e apparecchio generale*, 1549; in Brown 1975); yet her solo singing to lute accompaniment was found equally arresting. Given her prominent participation in other musical ensembles at the same event, Dalida Puti may well be the singer described by the court chronicler Cristoforo da Messisbugo as "a richly dressed young lady" who during the eleventh course of the banquet "came out of the bower and sang madrigals to the lute superbly well" (in Brown 1975).

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[2] See chapters two and three for contemporary descriptions of performances by the northern duchesses.

The lute song was not reserved for aristocratic amateurs and courtly entertainers. Early in the *cinquecento*, it moved into the realm of bourgeois domestic entertainment. Music schools for gently bred women, like Tromboncino's studio in Venice, taught women lute and singing. Tromboncino's career move from court composer and performer to civic music teacher is detailed in a letter of July 1518, a reply from the Ferrarese ambassador in Venice to Lucrezia Borgia, who had requested Tromboncino's return to Ferrara. Tebaldi writes,

> Most illustrious and Excellent Lady and most worthy patron, No earlier than last Saturday did I receive the letters of your Excellency of the seventh of this month, in which you ask me to inform Tromboncino on your behalf to come to your Excellency for reasons that you would tell him. I have done as you asked with Tromboncino, who told me that he does not know how he can satisfy your Excellency because he has rented a house here and has already begun to teach gentlewomen, so that he makes more money every day and that if he were now to absent himself for six or eight days, he would lose all he has begun. (In Prizer 1991, 7-8)

Prizer notes that "Tromboncino was assuredly teaching lute and voice," —indeed these were his primary skills besides composition, which would not have been considered as appropriate a subject for female students— and that "there must have been a fairly substantial market among the Venetian ladies for the skills he could teach them" (Prizer 1991, 8). Tebaldi goes on to relate that Tromboncino hoped by this new lucrative scheme to get out of debt and eventually bring his wife and family to Venice, and begs the Duchess to excuse the composer, as "his most urgent poverty does not allow him to leave" (in Prizer 1991, 8).

Tromboncino's school must have become quite successful for it was carried on by his own pupils, and his legacy exerted considerable musical influence on the Venetian community later in the century. In the *Vita della Signora Irene* Atanagi tells us that "a pupil of Tromboncino, the most perfect master of our city," passed on to Irene di Spilimbergo a "way of singing [that] was fuller and more delicate than any other," as well as "many of his compositions," and that she learned to sing and play "with as much grace and delicacy as the pupils of the aforementioned master themselves" (Dionigi Atanagi, *Vita della Signora Irene*, preface to *Rime di diversi nobilissimi et eccellentissimi autori in morte della Signora Irene delle Signore di Spilimbergo*, 1561; in Einstein 1949, I:50). Convenient access to education in singing and lute playing, available through schools like Tromboncino's Venetian female academy, allowed women of even the moderately wealthy bourgeoisie to further emulate their aristocratic contemporaries even without the full benefit of a courtly education. With the wider acquisition of necessary musical skills, the lute song quickly became a popular and permissible form of musical enrichment and entertainment in the domestic surroundings of bourgeois homes, as it had been in the courts and palaces of the nobility.

Tromboncino's adherent Irene di Spilimbergo, who was also a poet and artist, shared her skill and learning with a group of women who met regularly at her Venetian home in order to converse, play music, and draw. Musical and intellectual gatherings, like the ones hosted by Spilimbergo, offered women a performance venue that favoured the Italian lute song. The intimate setting of a group of friends meeting in private rooms mirrored the courts of the early Duchesses, where excellent food, scintillating conversation and music dominated each evenings' entertainment. Here the lute song functioned as a seemingly impromptu showcase of a woman's musical skill and poetic sensitivity. These salons, as well as the more formal Italian academies and confraternal *ridotti*, were alternately attended or hosted by women singers of diverse backgrounds: courtesans like Veronica Franco or Tullia d'Aragona, cultivated *donne di palazzo* like Irene di Spilimbergo and Polissena Pecorina, renowned poets Gaspara Stampa, Vittoria Colonna and Laura Terracina all frequented academies or held their own cultural salons where lute song performance figured prominently.

The lute song became an important manner of displaying a woman's poetic, compositional and vocal talent —sometimes to a predominantly male audience— and when a female singer's performance is described, it invariably involves some instance of singing to lute accompaniment. Polissena Pecorina's name, for instance, is associated specifically with the improvised lute song in a detailed letter of 17 March 1534, in which Ruperto Strozzi requests a new madrigal from Benedetto Varchi, praising this famous Venetian singer who "*canta sul leuto benissimo*" (in Newcomb 1975, 113 fn35); while Irene di Spilimbergo's biography tells us that she knew "a vast number of madrigals, odes, and Latin verse, to be recited to the accompaniment of the lute, and that she recited them in such a striking, delicate, and melodious manner that the greatest connoisseurs were amazed" (Atanagi 1561; in Einstein 1949, I:50). In the same year Antonio Molino records in his dialogue, *I fatti, e le produzze di Manoli Blessi* (Venice: Giolito, 1561) that Virginia Vagnoli sang and played the lute "most wonderfully"; Molino perhaps heard Vagnoli at the court of Urbino where she was employed along with her musician father from 1566-1570, and where the lute song was still in vogue, or in one of the many Venetian *ridotti* that she frequented as a guest performer. Women's participation in the academies and *ridotti* of Italy, which flourished from the 1530s through to the end of the century, carried the lute song tradition through the middle of the sixteenth-century when the polyphonic madrigal was enjoying social prominence, and helped to keep this particular performance genre alive.

The end of the sixteenth century and the early Baroque period saw the incredible popularity of female virtuoso singers, who entranced their audiences with elaborate vocal pyrotechnics on the stage and in the courts of Italy. With Vittoria Archilei, Virginia Andreini, Laura Bovia, Eufemia Joloza, Virginia Ramponi, Caterina Martinelli, and the members of the Ferrarese, Florentine and Mantuan *concerte di donne*, the list of famous female singers is lengthy and illustrious. Many of these women still favoured the simpler lute song for more intimate occasions, and their vocal solos self-accompanied on the lute were as generously admired as their ensemble performances in dramatic *intermedi*. Tarquinia Molza and Anna Guarini, members of the famed *concerto delle donne* of Ferrara, were skilled lutenists, both having been taught to play as part of the education of a courtly lady.[3] A particularly moving performance given by Tarquinia Molza for the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara in 1568 is recorded by her friend and biographer Francesco Patrizi, who declared that "there is nothing to be heard in the whole world that is more sweet, wonderful and divine, than her singing to lute accompaniment. This singing amazed Duke Alfonso and Duchess Barbara" (Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*; in Riley, 486). The acclaimed Roman *virtuosa* Vittoria Archilei was well known for her stunning theatrical performances in lavish *intermedi*, but on more than one occasion she awed the crowd with solo madrigals self-accompanied on the lute: the fifth interlude of *La Pelegrina*, a comedy by Girolamo Bargagli written for Ferdinando de' Medici's and Christine de Lorraine's wedding celebrations in 1589, featured "the famous Vittoria Archilei as Queen of the Sea singing, alone, the top line of a five-part madrigal, accompanied by herself on the lute" (Donington 1981, 65-66). Even the famous Caccini sisters, Francesca and Settimia, were lutenists, although they are remembered more for their fine voices and compositional skill. Their mother, Lucia, was also a skilled singer and lutenist, who on one occasion (again during the entertainment at the 1589 Medici wedding) improvised her own accompaniment on the lute for an aria composed for her by her husband Giulio Caccini.

The singing of these famous *virtuose* contributed to the popularity of the solo repertoire being composed by members of the Florentine camerata and the northern madrigalists at the end of the century, a repertory known as the 'new' monody, which was based on a humanist revival of Greek declamatory song. In fact, the increased recognition of female singers and their activities at the end of the century has become a hot topic in music scholarship, with many excellent studies being contributed by such scholars as Anthony Newcomb, Joanne Riley, Tim Carter, Susan Cook, Jane Bowers, and others. At the other end of the century women's participation in the promotion of the *frottola* as a lute song has been thoroughly researched and acknowledged by William Prizer, Iain Fenlon and other scholars of music of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries. Yet the two spheres of women's activities have remained quite separate in scholarship, and there has been no attempt to connect these temporally distant but musically similar phenomenons. Rather, scholarship's separation of monodic song and its resignation to the two ends of the century leaves a gap that half a century ago caused Einstein to wonder at the "enigma" of the rise of the madrigal: "an aberration, a deviation from the natural course of development initiated by the *frottola*, an aberration which —strange are the ways of history!— led back to the right track only through the equally artificial 'discovery' of monody toward the end of the century" (Einstein 1949, I:153). Music history's fragmentation of Renaissance musical development must be due in part to its concentration on male musical activities, for women's musical practice attests to an uninterrupted succession of lute song performance that bridges the gap between the courtly *frottola* and the early baroque aria, with its assimilation of the multi-voiced madrigal, into the continuation of a single, flexible performance practice of the Italian lute song.

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[3] Of the other two members of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* in the 1580s, Laura Peverara played the harp and Livia d'Arco played the viola.

Along with the records of court chroniclers, biographers and eye-witnesses who attest to women's lute song performance throughout the century, iconographical sources reveal complementary testimony. Women playing lutes are represented in frescoes, portraits, architectural carvings, book engravings, and even in a pack of 52 playing cards by Giovanni Palazzi (1681) representing famous aristocratic and citizen women of Venice. However, iconographical sources do not exclusively privilege female lutenists: both women and men appear as lute players in portraits, concert groupings and allegorical paintings in Italian Renaissance art, with no discernible favouritism for one gender or the other. For instance, in her discussion of "Images of Monody in the Early Baroque," Barbara Hanning considers eleven paintings and engravings, five of which feature male lutenists or singers, while three portray female lutenists, and four display both male and female musicians in a mixed consort.[4] Christopher Page's discussion of fifteenth-century sources of lute tuning and practice includes thirteen European engravings and illustrations of lutenists, only two of which depict women lute players, representative of what Page sees as evidence "for the lute as a woman's instrument" (there are seven male and four angelic lutenists, and women also play harp and hammered dulcimer along with male lutenists; Page 1981, 17). Interestingly, the two women play alone, seemingly for their own private recreation, while the depictions of male musicians show them performing in company: in five engravings they perform with or for women as equals in courtly and amorous settings, and the other two depict male lutenists as servants performing for royal entertainment or solace.

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[4] A brief survey of Renaissance art seemed to reveal a slight imbalance: of thirty-eight sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century paintings and engravings featuring lutenist-singers in various contexts (solo portraits, *vanitas* themes, musical allegories, family and pastoral concerts), found in general art collections and musicological articles and books, twenty-two depict female performers while sixteen portray males. I am reluctant, however, to propose that this suggests a

Perhaps more than the written accounts, which focus on famous professional or aristocratic singers, these paintings reveal that the lute song was practiced equally as a domestic entertainment in noble and also bourgeois households throughout the *cinquecento*. Many depictions of singer-lutenists are commissioned portraits, and the means and aspiration to have a portrait made of ones self, wife or daughters is itself indicative of a wealth and desire for leisure attached primarily to the upper classes. Andrea Solario's *The Lute Player* (Rome, Galleria Nazionale, c. 1500) depicts a well-dressed but not ostentatious young woman in a typical pose, face on to the viewer, who appears to be playing her lute. The *Three Young Women performing Claudin de Sermissy's chanson 'Jouyssance vous donneray'* (c.1530) presents a more informal setting of a family concert, where two of the women (perhaps sisters, for all three look remarkably alike) play a flute and lute from an open musicbook, while the third holds a sheet of music as if ready to sing.[5] A few paintings, especially those of the later Flemish school, appear to be life studies rather than family portraits, with a subject chosen by the painter rather than commissioned. The female lutenist in Orazio Gentileschi's *The Lute Player* takes a less conventional pose, for she sits with her back to us, head turned so that we see her face in profile, with the lute held high, almost against her ear. Her modest dress further separates

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gendered bias in musical paintings.

[5] See chapter two for more discussion of family concert portraits.

her from the portraits of rich, cultivated young women. Joannes Vermeer's *Woman with a lute* (c.1664) attests to the enduring use of the lute as private, domestic musical entertainment: in it the young woman appears preoccupied with tuning her instrument and gazing out the window, and, like Gentileschi's lutenist, is oblivious to the onlooker.

The Lute Song's Growing Identification as a 'Woman's Genre'

As paintings of both male and female lute players attest, although women are associated with singing lute songs from the early duchesses to the virtuosic soloists of the late-sixteenth century, we cannot claim the Italian lute song exclusively as a women's genre. In her attempt to strengthen women's position as performers of solo song, Joanne Riley dismisses the evidence of male lute song performance, especially practice by noblemen in the early part of the century. "Noble men were educated in the science of acoustics and the theory of counterpoint, but their experience by no means extended to the performance of secular songs about love, which was deemed a frivolous waste of time," Riley affirms; "there is no evidence to indicate that noble men musically *performed* the sentimental verses they so copiously poured out at this early stage" (Riley 1985, 474). As we have substantiated in chapter three, although the courtier's musical performance was imbued with controversy over the adverse effeminating effects of singing, it was also deemed a useful and ultimately respectable skill for men of noble birth. Singers and lutenists from the aristocracy were not uncommon: Ercole I d'Este was skilled on many accompanying instruments, and the chronicler Ugo Caleffini records that even in the midst of war, "every day as was his custom, he sang and played" (in Lockwood 1972, 112). Certainly noblemen employed male singer-lutenists in their courts, including many lesser nobles who were retained as courtiers but also offered their musical services when necessary.

As the *cinquecento* progressed, lute song performance appears to become more commonly thought of as a woman's genre, especially with the increasing popularity of the polyphonic madrigal in mainstream secular vocal music. With the emergence of male madrigal groups among bourgeois Italian societies and academies, the *a cappella* singing of polyphonic music was aligned with male performance practice, while lute songs remained a suitable musical outlet for women. Riley supports early scholars' observations that "the performance of the classic madrigal was decidedly reserved for men" (Riley 1985, 477). Records of musical confraternities and academies describe groups of men gathering to sight-read through new works, often written specifically for the enjoyment of their male members. Antonfrancesco Doni's *Dialogo della musica*, an anthology of madrigals and motets which contains a commentary in dialogue form on individual pieces and various musical topics, gives a picture of madrigals being performed in such a company. In the first part, four singers meet to try out a number of new pieces at an amateur musical evening in Piacenza; the four male interlocutors debate and sing four-part madrigals, one to a part, the top part being sung by Hoste, presumably in falsetto, and the alto by a youth, Michele. "Doni gives the impression that his convivial company was sight-reading all the music," having them discuss and sometimes repeat their performance (Haar 1966, 218). In the second part, set in Venice, the company numbers eight and a woman called "Selvaggia" (speculated to be the Venetian poetess and singer Isabetta Guasca) joins the group. The *a cappella* singing of up to eight-part madrigals alternates with poetic recitation and the performance of lute songs. Some poems are recited without music, but twice the character Ottavio Landi takes up an instrument to accompany some kind of improvised musical performance of poetry. Both lute song performances involve the voice of a woman: the first in Landi's recitation of verse by the female poet Virginia Salvi to *viuola* accompaniment, and the second in the accompaniment of a group of sonnets sung by Selvaggia at the very end of the work. "The sort of musical company Doni describes may have alternated the singing of polyphonic madrigals with improvisations of *strambotti* or sonnets to a strummed accompaniment" Haar observes (1966, 219); it is interesting to note that while the madrigal singing is dominated by male voices, the lute song performance features the female soloist of the group.

In his still valuable study of the Italian madrigal, Alfred Einstein pits the 'amateur' *a cappella* madrigal against the 'professional' lute song, saying, "it was considered elegant to follow one's part in a complex ensemble, more elegant, certainly, than to appear as a singer to lute accompaniment. These singers to the lute were nearly always professionals who were hired and paid as such" (Einstein 1949, I:153). Yet within the "small and select . . . circle . . . that cultivated secular music as a form of art and for which the collections of printers were obviously destined" the 'professional' musicians, especially composers and virtuoso singers, were most often treated as equals to the courtiers, wealthy bourgeois, and aristocratic patrons who comprised the typical cultural gathering. A sought-after composer such as Adrian Willaert, arguably the most highly skilled 'professional' of his group, could afford to be a temperamental artist, taking his time to set new poetry (or refusing to set it at all) and jealously hoarding his compositions, while earning the great respect and approbation of his contemporaries. Einstein, while correctly discerning between the lute song and the *a cappella* madrigal, missed the distinct gendered connotations of each, which made 'elegant' madrigal singing favourable to male amateurs.

The early publishing convention of scoring madrigals for men's voices —bass, two tenors and falsetto— substantiates the gendered association of the early madrigal with male singers. Yet several other social phenomena point to reasons why the new polyphonic madrigal quickly became an attractive secular vocal genre for amateur male musicians. Firstly, madrigal singing was a style aimed at the performers as subjects in the artistic process, rather than as objects to be admired (as female singers were). The men who sang (amateurs and professionals together) did so not to entertain others as a professional soloist or a woman might have done, but to flex their mental and musical muscles in a sort of team-effort musical study which they could then analyse and improve upon, while passing a critical judgement on the music. This simultaneous enjoyment and criticism of music that was engaged both visually in its written form and aurally as sounding music, flourished in the predominantly male academies and *ridotti* that were emerging all over Italy. Music academies, where madrigal composition and singing thrived, brought together noble and professional males of culture and intellect "who wished to enjoy some of the diversions and atmosphere of the inner court circle" in a more patrician environment (Riley 1985, 477). The predominance of male patrons and participants in such academies ensured that the madrigal remained most frequently sung by men. The sacred tradition of church music further aligned *a cappella* singing with male performance practice, for the skill required for sight reading and part singing complex polyphony had hitherto been taught almost exclusively to men in chapel choirs and cathedral schools, and hence men had more ready access to acquiring the necessary skills for singing the new secular vocal polyphony in its more complex contrapuntal forms. The gendered tradition of sacred vocal polyphony, the male intellectual clubs which sponsored madrigal composition and hosted performances and discussion, and the critical perspective applied to new madrigals which made their debuts in such academies, all contributed to a significant gendering of the early *a cappella* madrigal, which was significantly distanced from the more courtly, entertainment-oriented solo lute song associated with women's performance.

Despite the popularity of the male *a cappella* madrigal, scholarly and artistic societies known formally and informally as academies, *camerate* or *ridotti* comprised some of the major venues for the female lute song in sixteenth-century Italy. The earliest Italian *ridotti* were humanist reconstructions of Platonic academies where art, philosophy and the humanist disciplines were discussed and displayed. The first such group in which music figured prominently was the *Accademia Fiorentino* founded by Marsilio Ficino in the 1470s; the most illustrious poets of the city, men of letters and accomplished musicians including Ficino, Baccio Ugolini and Lorenzo de' Medici, all participated in the meetings of the academy. By the mid-sixteenth century, more than two hundred academies and countless informal confraternities and *ridotti* flourished in towns and cities across Italy, many of which were engaged in musical enterprises. Music functioned in various ways among the different academies: the theoretical, moral and curative elements of music became topics for discussion among learned intellectuals; music formed a vehicle for the recitation of the newly composed verses of leading poets; practical and theoretical musical instruction was offered; some of the more ambitious academies presented theatrical productions involving musical *intermedi*; composition and musical experimentation was promoted; and the lute song flourished as diversion and entertainment for the *camerate* members.

Contemporary author Pietro Cerone of Bergamo (b. 1566) describes the Italian academy as a refined and amiable musical institution in his Spanish treatise, *El melopeo y maestro* (1613):

> In many cities of Italy there are several houses called 'academies,' which are solely places of reunion for singers, players, and composers, who devote themselves to their art for two or three hours [a day]. The most famous masters of the town usually take part in them, and after the performance of their [most recent] compositions and the termination of the concert, usually discuss some musical problem, on which occasion everyone sets forth his opinion in a pleasant manner and concludes his discussions with profit to all. (In Einstein 1949, I:199-200)

One of the first academies which specifically focussed on music was the *Accademia Filarmonica* of Verona, established in 1543, whose library and large collection of instruments both survive today. The sixteenth-century publisher Angelo Gardano dedicated Willaert's six-voiced motets to the director of the *Accademia Filarmonica*, Marco Trivisano, saying, "let the world hear them in your illustrious salon, established for this very purpose, where you keep a large number of musical instruments of all kinds, where the most perfect vocal music is sung and played by the most outstanding musicians, and where for this reason the best society, fond of music and song, gathers regularly and with great pleasure" (in Einstein 1949, I:320). Another academy whose aim centred on music composition and performance, the *Academia degli Invaghiti* founded in 1562 by Cesare Gonzaga of Guastalla, had an initial membership of 30 which included both Scipione Gonzaga and the future Duke Ferdinando of Mantua. The society met in Cesare's Mantuan palazzo, and emphasized chivalric ceremony and the arts of oratory and versification, along with theatrical production. Fenlon observes that "discussion of the theoretical aspects of music was reasonably common in this type of academy, and this interest could extend to include practical music" (Fenlon 1980, 37); the *Academia degli Invaghiti*'s emphasis on theatrical productions led to the composition and performance of many necessary musical *intermedi* by members of their confraternity.

It is generally assumed that these formal academies and *camerate* were almost always the province of men. Alfred Einstein flatly declares that "the musical academy is a men's club and not a mixed salon" (Einstein 1949, I:196), while Joanne Riley echoes that the Italian academy was a place where men could gather "without the presence of women" (Riley 1985, 477). Women's participation in the less formal *ridotti*, however, was quite common, and although women were only rarely accepted as members of academies, they were somewhat more frequently invited to attend as guests. The esteemed *commedia dell'arte* actress Isabella Andreini was a member of the *Accademia degli Intenti* in Pavia, and a welcomed guest at many other prestigious academies. Barbara Salutati, singer, actress, and mistress to Machiavelli, was formally admitted (along with Machiavelli) to the literary circle *Il Fornaciaio* in Florence, in 1523. In certain instances, Barbara was paid for her musical services, which included singing songs written for her by Machiavelli for the interludes between the acts of *La Mandragola* and *Clizia*, and, at least in a 1526 performance of *Mandragola*, assisting to organize the musical and dramatic scenes as well.

The Pellizari sisters had a much more formal relationship with an Italian academy, for the child prodigies Lucia and Isabella were both employed as musicians along with their brother Antonio by the theater of the *Accademia Olimpica* in Vicenza, where they sang and played the cornetto and the trombone; they earned a salary of 20 ducats each per year for providing music for the academy twice a week on a regular basis and at other times as necessary. On one memorable occasion, the Pellizaris played for a solemn Mass celebrated on January 9, 1582, at the church of San Michele, for the entrance of the new prince of the academy. Later in their career, their duties may have included singing and giving singing lessons to young girls, and their brother was recognized as custodian and musician with responsibility for all the music given at the academy from 1582 on. Lucia and Isabella did not remain at the academy, however, but entered the service of the Mantuan court around 1587, where they remained well into the seventeenth century. The inclusion of women in the *Accademia Olimpica* lasted into the seventeenth century, for Ellen Rosand notes that "the presence of women at some meetings of the Vicentine *Accademia Olimpica* provided the occasion for an academic publication by the poet . . . Pietro Paolo Bissari, *Le scorse olimpiche* (Venice: Valvasense, 1648) . . . which cites the presence of female guests among the reasons for the high quality of the discourses delivered at the academy" (Rosand 1978, 247, fn.249).

As well as attending male academies as members or guests, women humanists, poets, noblewomen or courtesans often hosted *ridotti* or salons in their own homes or palaces, not unlike the cultivated courts held by the early northern duchesses. Sometimes these gatherings were intended for women's company only, and at others both men and women participated together. Rosand calls attention to a regular gathering of "nobilissime e graziosissime dame" at the court of Ferrara, hailing it as "a striking and exceptional example of an academy for women" (Rosand 1978, 246-247, fn.23). This Ferrarese society is mentioned in Bissari's *Le scorse olimpiche* (1648), as an "*Academia di Dame*" apparently headed by the brilliant Tarquinia Molza, where women (including the two Ferrarese singers Lucrezia and Isabella Bendidio) "contributed to the academic discussions as well as to the musical entertainment" (Rosand 1978, 246-247, fn.23).

Another example of an academy intended primarily for women is found in the gatherings hosted by Irene di Spilimbergo, a true 'Renaissance woman' renowned for her learning, music, embroidery, feminine virtue, and above all artistry in paintings and mosaics. Spilimbergo was a child prodigy who gained "great patience" and a good eye for color from her embroidery —attributes necessary to her future artistic endeavors. In her biography it is said that at a young age she "set aside the needle and reached for the brush," copying works by her teacher, Titian, and, according to Atanagi, mastering "color, foreshortening, *chiarascuro*, anatomy, and the handling of drapery" in only six weeks (in Jacobs 390-391). A group of ladies met regularly in the Venetian home of Irene di Spilimbergo in order to converse, play music, and draw; it was in this environment that Campaspe Giancarli extended to Irene artistic instruction, and she passed on her own learning to other women. As well as being an acclaimed artist, Irene was a musician skilled in singing, sight-reading, lute, harpsichord and viol. Notably in this informal female *accademia*, the women are associated with accompanied solo songs —"playing and singing to the lute, the harpsichord, and the viol" (Atanagi 1561; in Riley 474)— rather than the mixed voice *a cappella* madrigal. Irene di Spilimbergo did not reserve her musical talent for ladies alone, however, but was also invited to perform in the very best male academies in Venice; in F. Caffi's *Storia della musica sacra* (1855) she is listed as a frequent performer along with Franceschina Bellamano, Hippolito Tromboncino and Perissone Cambio, under the direction of the composer and *organisti* Girolamo Parabosco, at the home of the patrician Domenico Venier for his Venetian academy (in MacClintock 1956, 181). She was well loved and upon her premature death was eulogized by at least seven members of Venier's literary circle.

Both the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes of Italy participated in musical and literary academies. Renée of France (1510-1575), the daughter of Anne of Brittany and King Louis XII of France, and Duchess of Ferrara from 1528, carried on the tradition of the northern duchesses by hosting an academy in her apartments at the ducal palace. Though her pious protestant leanings dictated an interest chiefly in religious and philosophical discussion which set her apart from her pleasure-loving, secular predecessor, Lucrezia Borgia, Renée presided over an academy which attracted some of the foremost scholars in Italy. Renée's academy was was frequented by, among others, the Franciscan friar of the order of Capuchins, Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564), whose fiery sermons drew great crowds during the Lenten season of 1537, her secretary Bernardo Tasso (the only Italian in Renée's employ), and the premier Petrarchan poet Vittoria Colonna (1492-1547), who became the duchess's good friend. Called "the paragon of women poets" (Cochrane 1988, 74) and "the greatest literary attraction of her century" (Tuscian 1971, 172), Colonna's poems survive in 54 manuscript copies and some 340 known printed volumes of collected works from across Italy. She was the friend of Castiglione and Michelangelo and would have been welcome at any academy; she may well have sung her poetry to lute accompaniment according to the popular style of the day at these *ridotti*, or even during Duchess Renée's literary gatherings.

Women contributed to the intellectual and cultural development of the Italian academy in various ways. Barbara Sanseverino, Contessa di Sala, and Agnese Argotta, Marchesa di Grana, were both involved in Mantuan and Ferrarese literary and artistic circles (the two women were also both mistresses to Vincenzo Gonzaga). They both maintained a connection with the famed *Accademia degli Invaghiti* of Mantua: Agnese corresponded regularly with the academy's director Bernardo Marliani, and is the dedicatee of Giaches Wert's tenth book of madrigals (1591), which refers to her great love of poetry and music; Barbara inspired two members of the *Invaghiti*, for she is the dedicatee of Giacomo Moro's *Gli encomii musicali* of 1585, and of Wert's setting of Tasso's 'Tolse Barbara gente' in his Sixth book à 5 of 1577. In the early 1590s, Agnese Argotta moved into the sumptuous Mantuan Palazzo del Te (built by Vincenzo's grandfather Federico Gonzaga in 1524-34 as an elegant pleasure palace and designed and decorated by the famed Giulio Romano), where she set up her own small academy "principally devoted to the arts of versification and music," which attracted the nobility of the court along with famous artists, writers and musicians of Ferrara and Mantua, including Tasso and Guarini (Fenlon 1980, 149). Her academy produced the poetic anthology *Tesoro delle ninfe*, and may also have issued Giaches Wert's tenth book of madrigals, which both Fenlon and MacClintock believe was the product of Argotta's salon. According to Fenlon, Wert's tenth book "includes many madrigals to texts in the new madrigal style of Tasso and Guarini that also characterises the *Tesoro*" (Fenlon 1980, 149), while MacClintock concludes that Wert's madrigals "were composed certainly to please both the Duke and the Lady" (MacClintock 1966, 50).

Argotta was also a singer and lutenist, and likely performed lute songs in her own Mantuan *ridotta* as well as at meetings of the *Invaghiti* and other cultivated gatherings. A song dedicated to Agnese in Giacomo Moro's *Gli encomii musicali* of 1585 refers to the Marchesa as a performer, and one of Manfredi's *Cento madrigali* recalls a performance that moved the poet to tears —"she played and sang one time not like any other, so very sweetly that I wept, and she offered her own handkerchief, most pleasantly, to dry my tears" (in Fenlon 1980, 149).[6] In 1591, Agnese Argotta undertook her most ambitious project—a Mantuan production of Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*, complete with accompanying *intermedi* on the theme of the harmony of the four elements. Argotta, along with Duke

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[6] "Ella suonava, e cantava una volta, fra l'altre, alcune cose, e sì soavemente, ch'io piansi, ella col proprio fazzoletto in atto piacevolissimo mi asciugi le lagrime" (in Fenlon 1980, 149).

Vincenzo, organized and directed the arrangements for the production, the music was composed by Giaches Wert, and rehearsals began in November. Due to unforeseen difficulties, the project was twice put on hold and taken up again in 1592 and in 1593, and then eventually abandoned. A successful Mantuan performance of *Il Pastor Fido* was finally staged in 1598, when the play was performed in the courtyard of the Palazzo del Te.

As the activities of Agnese Argotta evince, women participated in Italian salons, academies and *ridotti* as singers and lutenists, actresses, theatrical producers, poets and muses; women also have contributed to Italian academies in a role typically reserved for male musicians— that of composer. The most well-known example of a woman composer in sixteenth-century Italy is Madalena Casulana, whose madrigals first appeared in an anthology entitled *Il Desiderio* (1566). Soon after this, Casulana released two complete books of four-voiced madrigals in 1568 and 1570, and two more were published in 1583 and 1586. As with many women authors, Casulana had made a valuable friend and sponsor in the Venetian literary world, who helped make her publications possible. Antonio Molino was a successful Venetian merchant, amateur actor, poet, and founder of a musical academy which met in his home. Molino evinced great interest in the budding young composer, and as well as assisting her efforts at publication, engaged her as his music teacher, despite his advanced age: Madalena's "ability is such," he wrote in the dedication to Casulana of his first book of madrigals (1568), "that it would kindle in the hoariest intelligence a new desire for glory" (in Newcomb 1987, 106). Although no specific accounts of Casulana's performances exist, it is easy to speculate that this active singer, teacher and composer performed in Molino's academy and perhaps at other *ridotti* in Venice as well, singing songs written for her by others, or debuting her own madrigals either as solo lute songs or in company with male singers.[7]

Not far from Venice, the talented and charming Laura Peverara (fl. 1580-1601) was singing for the *Accademia Filarmonica* in Verona. Her father was a wealthy Mantuan merchant and dilettante but accomplished harpist; of her mother we only know her name Margherita. Their daughter Laura was given a musical education and she sang divinely and accompanied herself on the harp, quickly gaining a reputation as the premiere soprano in northern Italy. A poem by Mattteo Asola refers to Peverara's visits to Verona, and Newcomb suggests that the *Accademia Filamonica*'s "concerts during the 1570's were probably often graced by the singing of Peverara" (Newcomb 1975, 332). Moving to Ferrara in 1580 as lady-in-waiting to the young Duchess Margherita Gonzaga, Peverara became the central soprano of the famous Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*. She may have also performed for the members of the Ferrarese music academy *I Rinnovati*, or they may have heard her sing during one of the court's *musica secreta* concerts. The academicians commissioned two musical anthologies —*Il lauro secco* (1582) and *Il lauro verde* (1583)— with works specially collected by Ippolito Gianluca, an influential Este courtier, and compiled by Torquato Tasso and dedicated them to this young diva. Both Gianluca and Tasso were members of *I Rinnovati*, and Tasso had loved Peverara during his student days in Padua when he wrote some 75 poems for her between 1564 and 1567. The *Accademia Filarmonica* contributed a third anthology (c.1580) in honor of Peverara, which Turin, in his history of the *Academia Filarmonica di Verona*, declares "is not a musical anthology, but a magnificent wreath (*corono*) of madrigals in praise of a *Laura*, living glory of Mantua, who in one of the madrigals declares herself born of a *Margherita* (pearl)" (in Kenton 1966, 503).

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[7] Newcomb speculates that Casulana took over Virginia Vagnoli's place as the leading female singer in Molino's academy (1987, 114).

A striking detail of women's participation in academies and *ridotti* is that their musical performance predominantly features the Italian lute song. Although it was not unknown for women to sing in mixed madrigal groups within confraternal circles (such as is described by Antonfrancesco Doni in his *Dialogo*), and their performance in the theatrical productions sponsored by certain academies is amply documented, by far the majority of descriptions of female singing during a typical evening at an Italian *ridotti* involves the performance of a lute-accompanied solo song.[8] One of the best known female singers whose performances were chiefly held at Venetian salons and academies during the 1530s-1550s is Polissena Pecorina. A good friend of the composer Adrian Willaert, Pecorina was a married Venetian gentlewoman whose antecedents are unknown. Although some scholars (Einstein 1949, for example) class La Pecorina among Venice's famous courtesans, there is no evidence for this assumption, and Newcomb's speculation that she was "one of the cultivated upper-class *donne di palazzo*" who frequented the Venetian salons (Newcomb 1975, 106) is just as plausible, especially given that Antonfrancesco Doni acknowledges her as the "consorte" (consort or wife) "d'un cittadino della mia patria" and calls her a "gentildonna . . . tanto virtuosa et gentile" (Doni, letter of April 7, 1544; in Einstein 1949, I:198).

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[8] Another example of women's participation in four-part *a cappella* singing may be inferred from an interesting letter from Bartolomeo Tromboncino of April 2, 1535. When music

Pecorina was a regular guest at the musical academy hosted by the Florentine nobleman and avid music patron Neri Capponi, and headed by St. Marco's *maestro di cappella*, Adrian Willaert. She also performed regularly for the informal academy of Domenico Venier, and may even have hosted her own salon. Einstein maintains that Pecorina held an academy headed by Willaert in her house—"Polissena Pecorina, the most famous singer in Venice . . . maintained at her house an entire musical academy with Willaert as its director" (Einstein 1949, I:164). It was likely at Neri Capponi's salon, or perhaps at the home of "the most honorable Messer Alessandro Colombo," that Antonfrancesco Doni heard Pecorina sing soon after his arrival in Venice:

> If you could hear the heavenly things which with the ears of understanding I have enjoyed here in Venice, you would be amazed. There is here a lady, Polissena Pecorina (the wife of a compatriot of mine), so clever and so cultivated that I cannot find words to praise her. One evening I heard a concert of *violini* and voices, at which she sang and played with other outstanding personalities: the perfect master of this music was Adriano Willaert; [it was] in that diligent style of his, no longer followed by musicians, so well wrought, so sweet, so appropriate, so marvellously

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theorist Giovanni del Lago requests a copy of Tromboncino's *Se la mia morte brami*, the composer replies by sending a transcript of the lute song, and regretting that he did not have time to arrange it for four-part vocal polyphony as del Lago requested; in the same letter he sends his regards to Girolamo Molino, Pre Bastiano and a certain Madonna Paola, perhaps, along with del Lago, the four who proposed to sing the work at one of Molino's musical evenings (Tromboncino's letter is translated in Eintstein 1949, 1:47-48).

> adapted to the text that I own to having never known what harmony is until that evening. (Letter of April 7, 1544 from Antonfrancesco Doni in Venice to Marquis Annibale Malvicino; in Einstein 1949, I:198)

Pecorina's beautiful voice and consummate musicianship inspired contemporary poets and composers: at least one madrigal by Arcadelt, "Quando co'l dolce suono" from his *Libro Primo* published in 1539 by Gardano, is addressed to the Venetian *virtuosa*, while Willaert's *Qual dolcezza giamai* praises Pecorina's beauty and talent:[9]

Qual dolcezza giammai
Di canto di sirena
Involvò i sensi e l'alma chi l'udiro
Che di quella non sia minor assai
Che con la voce angelica e divina
Desta nei cor la bella Pecorina

Just as the sweetness
of the siren's song ever
captures the senses and the soul of the listener,
so does she, the beautiful Pecorina,
no less stir the heart
with her angelic and divine voice.

Anne-Marie Bragard further suggests that Willaert's arrangement of Verdelot madrigals for solo voice and lute may have been made for Polissena Pecorina and her circle (Bragard 1964, 13). Certainly these well-loved lute songs would have made excellent material for the talented singer, for they suited her choice of venue as well as the display of her vocal and instrumental expertise. Verdelot's madrigals as well as Willaert's own compositions, a collection of which (later to be published as Willlaert's *Musica Nova*) was in Pecorina's possession until she sold it to Prince Alfonso d'Este in 1554, could well have been performed by the gifted *virtuosa*.

The lute song flourished as a woman's performance genre in many informal literary and musical academies, including the famed Venetian salon of Domenico Venier (1517-

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[9] Arcadelt also addressed madrigals to a certain Isabella ("Charissima Isabella," *Secondo Libro*, 1539) and Flaminia (*terzo libro*, 1539) whom Einstein names as "among the musical *donne da bene* of Venice" (Einstein 1949, 1:175). See chapter four for more discussion regarding the conventionalized language describing women's voices.

1582). Venier, a successful Venetian patrician and senator, was immensely interested in literature and music; after his retirement from the Senate, his palazzo at Santa Maria Formosa became a prestigious meeting place for writers, artists, musicians and scholars from all social classes. Venier presided over this informal academy begun in 1546 until his death in 1582. According to popular fashion, on any given day in Venier's *ridotti*, one might expect to hear serious polyphonic madrigals by Adrian Willaert or neo-Petrarchan poetry by Pietro Bembo, as well as lighter genres of Italian *canzoni villanesche* and *villotte* and French chansons. Although, as Feldman notes, "no direct reports tell of Venetian madrigals performed in the Venier household," Venier maintained strong connections with composers of polyphony, including Parabosco, Girolamo Fenaruolo, Girolamo Molino, Perissone Cambio, Baldassare Donato, and even the aging Adrian Willaert, who published not only serious madrigals but many works in the lighter genres of *canzoni villanesche* and *villotte* (Feldman 1995, 97-98). Following contemporary practices, these works would be recited by the poets or composers to instrumental accompaniment, sung by male madrigal groups, or performed by a soloist in arrangements for voice and lute or harpsichord.

Although references to polyphonic madrigal singing do not appear in the letters surrounding Venier's academy, Feldman notes that "references to solo singing recur often in the Venier literature—always in conjunction with women" (Feldman 1995, 103). This is not to say that male *a cappella* singing never took place in Venier's salon, but the curious absence of references to this pastime and the abundance of accounts of the female solo lute song attest not only to the sustaining popularity of lute song performance in a culture increasingly dominated by polyphonic composition, but to the many outstanding and memorable Venetian female singer-lutenists and the privileged place they held under Venier's patronage. Veronica Franco, Franceschina Bellamano, Polissena Pecorina, Polissena Frigera, Irene di Spilimbergo, Virginia Vagnoli and Gaspara Stampa are all lauded as excellent singers (and in most cases lutenists as well) in letters and literature associated with Venier's informal academic meetings. Their mesmerizing performances inspired many poetic encomiums, such as Venier's sonnet *Ne 'l bianco augel, che 'n* *grembo a Leda giacque* which praises Bellamano's performance of a lute song, with a delightful pun on her surname, *bella mano*, the lovely hand:

> With various words, now this, now that string
> Does the lovely hand touch on the hollow wood,
> Miraculously tuning her song to its sound.
> (Venier, sonnet 68, 9-11; in Feldman 1995, 103)

Francheschina Bellamano is listed among Italy's renowned "Donne a liuto et a libro" by the music theorist Pietro Aaron in his 1545 *Lucidario in musica*, and praised by Dionigi Atanagi in his preface to Venier's sonnet as "a virtuous lady, who sings and plays the lute most excellently" (*"una virtuosa donna, che cantava, & sonava eccellentemente di liuto"* in Feldman 1995, 104). Bellamano is also hailed along with Polissena Pecorina and Polissena Frigera (about whom little else is known, beyond a letter addressed to her in Parabosco's second book of *Lettere amorose*, 1573) as "one of the three most noted female musicians of the modern era" in Ortensio Landi's *Sette libri de cathaloghi* of 1552 (in Feldman 1995, 104). The activities of these four women in Venetian academies and salons, and the excellence of their performances were instrumental in helping the lute song retain its popular appeal while further aligning it with women's performance.

According to Martha Feldman, one of the "most lauded solo singer[s] usually associated with the first decade of Venier's academy was the famed poet Gaspara Stampa" (Feldman 1995, 104). The daughter of a well-off Paduan jeweler, Gaspara Stampa (1524-1554) was educated after the fashion of the upper classes, with instruction in courtly etiquette, basic humanist studies and music. Her father died while she was still young, and in 1530 her mother moved with her three young children to Venice. There she set up a *ridotto* "into which the brightest lights of Venice's bookish world were soon eager to be accepted" (Newcomb 1987, 106). Gaspara never married but had two well-documented affairs, and although she (like all the women he mentions) is labelled a courtesan by Einstein, she was, in her day, treated as a virtuous and respected woman.[10] As well as being an esteemed Petrarchan poet, Stampa was also an accomplished musician, as were her sister Cassandra, a singer, and her brother Baldassare, a poet. As Frank Warnke remarks, Stampa was "endowed not only with physical beauty but also with poetic and musical skills as well as a high degree of cultivation" (Warnke 1987, 4).

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[10] Frank J. Warnke also calls Gaspara Stampa a *cortegiana oneste*, stating that as such "she enjoyed a social status of some dignity" (Warnke 1987, 3). While other scholars of Stampa's poetry and life, including Abdelkader Salza and Justin Vitiello, also believe Gaspara was a

Stampa received the praise and admiration of some of the foremost poets, thinkers and composers of her day. Parabosco makes much of Stampa's singing, praising her effusively in his *Libro primo delle lettere amorose* of 1545:

> What shall I say of that angelic voice, which sometimes strikes the air with its divine accents, making such a sweet harmony that it not only seems to everyone who is worthy of hearing it as if a Siren's . . . but infuses spirit and life into the coldest stones and makes them weep with sweetness? (in Feldman 1995, 105)

Girolamo Molino also refers to Stampa as a siren, and Ortensio Landi praises her musical abilities, as does Orazio Brunetti when he "begs re-entry into her salon with the plea that he has missed her marvelous singing and especially her rendition of Petarch's *Chiare fresche*" (letter from Brunetti to Stampa; in Feldman 1995, 108).The madrigalist Perissone Cambio praises Stampa's talent in the dedication to his *Primo libro di madrigali a quatro voci*, which he dedicates to the "divine siren" and her "sweet harmonies" (in Feldman 1995, 108).[11]

> To the lovely and talented Signora Gasparina Stampa. Noble lady, well might I be reproved by admirable science—reproved in this science, yes, but no man in the world will ever be able to say that I have had little judgment in dedicating these notes of mine to your ladyship, however they may be. Because it is well known by now —and not only in this fortunate city, but almost everywhere— that no woman in the world loves music as much as you do, nor possesses it to such a rare degree. And thousands upon thousands of fine and noble spirits attest to this, who, having heard your sweet harmonies, have given you the name of divine siren, remaining over time your most devoted servants, among whom I am as devoted as any. I come with this my little token and gift to refresh the memory of the love that I bear for your talent, begging that you deign to find me worthy to be placed where you place the innumerable throngs of those who adore and love your rare talents and

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courtesan, Fiora A. Basanese emphasizes that although this is certainly possible, there is no concrete evidence to support this assumption (see Warnke 1987).

[11] See chapter four for a discussion of Cambio's dedication in context of the prevalent dual imagery of Muse and Siren.

> beauties. And to your graces I commend and offer myself. Most devoted servant Pieresson Cambio. (In Feldman 1995, 373)

Feldman notes that Perissone's compositional output was not only inspired by Stampa's bewitching voice, but influenced in a much more tangible way by her consummate lute song performance. "Many of his four-voice madrigals [possess] that indefinable, memorable, and tuneful quality that Pirrotta linked to the Italians' notion of 'aria'," writes Feldman, and are pervaded by a "treble-dominated writing and periodic phrasing" typical of the early *frottola* as well as of Verdelot's and many of Willaert's madrigals, and well-suited to lute song performance (Feldman 1995, 109 & 373). The works in Perrisone's *Primo libro a 4*, published after his first book of five-voice madrigals, "strike a course midway between the tradition of melodious song practised by Stampa and the thick, motet-like style found in the new five- and six-voice Venetian madrigals" (Feldman 1995, 108). Even though the works in his *Primo libro a 4* are arranged for publishing as four-part polyphony, many of them are easily adaptable for solo singing to lute accompaniment, and it is entirely reasonable to imagine that they would have been performed by a solo treble singer like Gaspara Stampa, or one of the many other notable female singer-lutenists of Venier's circle.

In addition to the written works created for them by admiring composers and patrons, the female singer-lutenists of the Italian salons would have performed in the tradition of the fifteenth-century improvisors, using either their own melodies or existing *modi de cantare*. The sung recitation of poetry to standard musical *arie* —formulaic melodies suitable for *canzoni*, *sonnetti* or *frottole*— was a popular medium for poets who wished to present new verses before the assembled literary company of an academy or salon. This performance method was especially favoured by female poets like Gaspara Stampa whose beauty of face and voice, as well as their musical and lyrical skills, were exalted at salons like Domenico Venier's. In fact, the lute was a common metaphorical symbol used to denote a female poet or writer; for example, the writers Moderata Fonte and Giullia da Ponte are both portrayed with lutes in a pictorial deck of cards representing famous Venetian women.[12]

Along with Gaspara Stampa, Veronica Franco, Vittoria Colonna, Veronica Gambara and Tullia d'Aragona were all singers and lute players as well as poets, and almost certainly would have employed the popular recitative style of the improvisatory lute song for the performance of their poetry in the various academies and salons that they both hosted and attended. In her study of Venetian music culture, Martha Feldman experiments with fitting Gaspara Stampa's verses to the *aeri* published in Petrucci's fourth book of *frottole*. "What emerges from such an exercise," writes Feldman, "is how very singable her lyrics are—not only in the musicality of their scansion and sound groups, but in their thematizing of the very process of reciting in song" (Feldman 1995, 105). Feldman also demonstrates how various anonymous settings in the Bossinensis lute books work equally well with verses by Stampa of the same poetic form.

Contrary to the earlier lack of evidence which leads William Prizer to comment that women who did not compose (and he is especially concerned with noblewomen of the rank of Isabella d'Este) "would have been unable to perform in the earlier, unwritten tradition, in which every improviser was to a certain extent a *faiseur*, that is, a composer" (Prizer 1989, 146), there is significant confirmation that the female singer-lutenists (many of them noblewomen) who frequented Italian academies and salons were fluent in the art of the improvisatory lute song. A detailed letter of 17 March 1534, by Ruberto Strozzi from Venice, requesting a madrigal "in praise of the lady Pulisena" reveals that Polissena Pecorina, though not a poet herself, was quite capable of reciting the poems she commissioned in this improvisatory style.

> Make it in praise of the said Pulisena (who sings very well both in improvising and in reading music), put her name in it, make the two final verses rhyme, and make them eleven syllables apiece, and she would like her name to be mentioned somewhere after the middle of the madrigal. I resolved to tell you each particular, so that you would not complain as you did the last time that I had not explained it to you. So now you can see very well what the lady desires. I leave it to you, who would know better what to do than I what to say. (In Agee 1983, 2)

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[12] These cards are reproduced in Rosenthal 1992.

Strozzi's wording here implies that this madrigal was not to be set to music by Adrian Willaert as he is attempting to have done with some earlier epigrams sent to Venice by Varchi ("you would like me to have one of those poems set to music by Adriano; I'll do everything I can, but I won't promise you for certain, because it is a game of patience to get him to do anything; still, I will try with all my power, and if I get it, I'll send it to you" [letter of 17 March 1534; in Agee 1983, 1]). Rather, Strozzi's request is made on behalf of Pulisena herself, who has sent detailed instructions on the poetic form of the poem. Pulisena, who "*canta sul leuto benissimo, ed in su' libri*," was adept at the improvised lute song which still flourished in the 1530s, and either intended to set the poem to music herself upon receipt of the madrigal, or already had a musical *aria* in mind, for which she specifies the metre and rhyme scheme of the lyrics she requires.

Of course, the association of improvisatory singing with female poets and singers does not unequivocally prove that these women composed their own tunes as did late-fifteenth-century improvisators like Pietrobono, for they could easily turn to ready-made melodies suited to a particular poetic form or metre, created by other composers specifically for use with interchangeable texts. Yet there is other evidence which indicates that many of the women now known primarily as singers were also composers, even though the music itself was either never written down or is lost to us today. While Jane Bowers identifies only five women composers whose works appeared in print in the sixteenth century, she attests that "many women who were well known as singers are reported to have composed music for their own use" (Bowers 1987, 120).[13] For instance, there is a suggestion of female lute song composers among the works in the manuscript *Miscellanea MS. Mus. C. 311* at the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, compiled by Cosimo Bottegari. Bottegari's lute book contains two songs for voice and lute that bear the names of the noblewomen Isabella de' Medici (1542-76) and Leonora Orsina, duchess of Segni (d. 1576), although the attributions to them are puzzling. The song *Lieta vivo et contenta* carries the heading "di Autore Incerto—idest S^{ra} Isabella Medici," and Isabella's name also appears in the index of music. Nevertheless, as Carol MacClintock points out, it is not clear whether the attribution to Isabella refers to the text of the song, the music, or both. One other song, *Per pianto la mia carne,* carries the heading "Della Illus^{ma} et Ecc^{ma} S^{ra} Leonora Orsina Duchessa di Segni," implying authorship, but in the index her name appears in a list of dedicatees of songs.

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[13] These composers include Madalena Casulana (three books of madrigals of 1566, 1568 and 1570, and works appearing in madrigal collections in 1583 & 1586), Paola Massarenghi of Parma (1585), Vittoria Aleotti of Ferrara (1591, 1593), Raffaella Aleotti (1593), and Cesarina Ricci di Tingoli (1597). Sixteenth-century women who are identified as composers in contemporary reports, though no music by them survives, include Caterina Willaert, the nuns Faustina Borghi, Sulpitia Cesis, and Cecilia Torniella, and Signora Baglioncella from Perugia.

That the works of many female singers identified as composers were never printed perhaps indicates that these women composed primarily for their own personal use; it is only natural, therefore, that they should have composed in the style that they themselves performed. Several of the later famous female virtuosi who were so popular toward the end of the century were known to have composed music for specific performance occasions, including lute songs. In the dedication of his *Primo libro de' madrigali a cinque voci* (1583), Camillo Cortellini praises Laura Bovia, a Bolognese soprano who sang from 1584-1587 with Giulio Caccini's *concerto delle donne* at the Florentine court, as being "most skilled in composing" (in Bowers 1987, 120). The brilliant Signora Tarquinia Molza, an accomplished poet, ravishing singer, and skilled on the harpsichord, lute and viola, wrote poetry and learned music performance and composition at early age. In 1582, she joined the court at Ferrara, where she functioned as composer, singer, and teacher, and was integral to the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*. Joanne Riley has convincingly argued that Molza was an expert in both the solo lute song style and the contrapuntal polyphonic style of composition (Riley 1985); she composed music that she herself performed as well as for the *concerto delle donne*, which Riley conjectures that Molza organized and taught.

The compositional activity of Adriana Basile and her sisters Vittoria and Margherita, as well as her daughter Leonora Baroni, is documented in various contemporary accounts: in a letter of 1616, for instance, Monteverdi suggests that Adriana, Vittoria and Margherita compose the parts they will sing in an upcoming

Mantuan entertainment (in Rosand 1978, 254). The famed virtuosi Vittoria Archilei, Settimia Caccini and Francesca Caccini, are also all mentioned as composers in contemporary literature. While only Francesca Caccini became a published composer during her musical career, according to Jacopo Cicognini, all three women composed the pieces they sang in the *Mascherata di ninfe di Senna* produced in Florence in 1611:

> The music of the above-mentioned ottave was composed by the same women who sang them: the first was sung by the Roman Signora Vittoria Archilei, with her usual grace and angelic voice; the second with supreme delicacy by Signora Settimia; the third, with her customary spontaneity, and to the admiration of all by Signora Francesca, both of these last named being daughters of that renowned Giulio Romano. (In Bowers 1987 121)

The multi-talented Vincenza Armani, best known as a *commedia dell'arte* actress who was poisoned by a rival in love in 1569, is described in an elaborate encomium of 1570 by Adriano Valerini of Verona as a composer and performer of lute songs: "by herself [she] wrote madrigals, set them to music, and sang them; she was a most graceful player of various instruments, a worthy sculptress in wax, fluent and profound in conversation, and a very fine actress" (*Oratione d'Adriano Valerini Veronese: In morte della Divina Signora Vincenza Armani, Comica Eccellentissima. . . . Con alquante leggiadre e belle Compositioni di detta Signora Vincenza,* Vincenza, 1570; in Newcomb 1975, 102). Countless other female singers and lutenists may also have been composers in their own right, although they did not achieve the lasting fame that publication brought, for they composed within the oral tradition of the Italian lute song. In contrast to publishing conventions which preserved the *frottola*, madrigal and *canzonetta* in the guise of multi-voice vocal polyphony, the performance practice and compositional activities of these women further identified the solo lute song as a woman's genre which encompassed music to be performed and admired but not necessarily preserved or studied.

The Lute Song's Association with the Italian Courtesan Tradition

Though many of the women who hosted or participated in Italian academies and *ridotti* were respectable upperclass *gentildonne* with intellectual and cultural interests, a significant number of famous singer-lutenists were (as Einstein, following in the tradition of Renaissance misogynists seems to claim all female singers were) members of the courtesan profession—that class of women who practised prostitution among the Italian elite, culturally and in some cases legally distinguished from lower class prostitutes. The lute song's connection to the Italian courtesan tradition (an ideological association whose strength is evident in the lingering assumptions of Einstein and others) contributed to its identity as a women's genre. The famed *cortegiane oneste* of Rome and (later) Venice, renowned for their learning and cultural accomplishments as well as their beauty and sexual expertise, styled themselves after the elegant courtly lady of Castiglione's description. Margaret Rosenthal remarks that the term *cortegiana onesta* adopted by the Italian courtesans "redefines the male humanist category of *virtù* as a woman's intellectual integrity," drawing attention to the profession's intellectual and cultural activities and "dissociating it from the selling of one's body for financial gain" (Rosenthal 1992, 6).

Music and poetry became essential tools for the best courtesans, figuring as "strategies for self-advancement" in much the same way as they functioned for the male courtier or lady-in-waiting (Rosenthal 1992, 6), and the lute became a familiar hallmark of the courtesan as much as the peacocks, monkeys, rich silks, jewels and exotic ornaments which adorned her apartments and person. Music is singled out as an integral element of the courtesan's attractions in a letter from Lelio Capilupi, a young courtier, to his friend Pietro Pamfili, the *maestro di casa* of the Duchess of Urbino. Lelio, visiting Rome for the first time, relates how he spent a night with a singular "Neapolitan charmer," stating satisfactorily that they "remained happily alone together all the next day, dining in my house and singing Neapolitan songs" (in Masson 1975, 139). Even if a courtesan was not musically inclined, musical instruments and books of poetry were a common part of her decor. In Pietro Aretino's satirical *I Ragionamenti* (1534), intended to expose the immoral world of Roman prelates and prostitutes, the fictional procuress Nanna, who is educating her daughter in the ways of a courtesan, advises her to practice the lute and clavichord in her spare time, but above all to keep musical instruments and books of poetry visible, even if she does not play or sing: "she was to make sure that she was seen reading Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Petrarch's sonnets and Boccaccio's *Decameron* and to leave them, very much in evidence in her room" (Masson 1975, 31). Besides, Nanna argues, musical instruments can easily be converted to cash if necessary.

At least one Roman courtesan exemplifies Nanna's advice, for in a 1506 *novella*, Matteo Bandello details the famous Imperia's life, noting that "there was always a lute or *viola da bracio* [in her boudoir], also books of music and other musical instruments. There were also many books in Latin and Italian, richly bound" (in Masson 1975, 37). There are no accounts of Imperia singing or playing the lute or her other instruments, but Bandello recalls that "she really delighted in Italian poetry, and having been encouraged and taught by our most pleasing Messer Niccolo Campana —called Strascino— she had already made such progress as to have herself composed some not unpleasing sonnets and madrigals" (in Masson 1975, 37). Masson speculates that this poetry was written to be sung by Imperia after the fashion of the times, and also notes that the same Strascino who taught her poetry was an accomplished *improvisator* and likely instructed Imperia in singing and playing as well as writing:

> it is fairly certain, however, that Imperia would have been able to play the lute or the *viola da braccio*, not only because they were then as popular as the guitar is today, but because Niccolo Campana, who taught her to write poetry, was adept at improvising songs, accompanying himself on the *viola da braccio*, and was in fact the most fashionable entertainer of the day. (Masson 1975, 39).

Imperia was the first in a long line of 'intellectual' courtesans who frequented Italian academies, held literary or musical salons in their own homes, and attracted the foremost humanist thinkers, artists and scholars among their clientele. In 1638, the household inventory of Venetian courtesan Paolina Provesin contained several musical instruments including a clavicembalo, spinet, theorbo, lute and harp, along with various books of music—everything needed for a cultivated musical party. A knowledge of music and poetry was one aspect of the courtesan tradition that set it apart from the lower class of prostitutes and raised these celebrated women to the level of the courtly lady. Their success is evident in the number of laws and court proceedings from different cities and towns which attempt to restrict their dress, living area and behaviour due to citizens' complaints that they could not tell a courtesan from a noble lady.[14]

Music, and particularly the lute song, figured prominently in the self-fashioning of the *cortegiana onesta*; as Newcomb suggests it was "an important and often cited part of the arsenal of delights manipulated by these women . . . [in their] imitations of the ideal donna di palazzo" (Newcomb 1987, 102). A letter from Camilla Pisana, one of the most fashionable courtesans in Florence, to Francesco del Nero (a friend and relation of Machiavelli) invites del Nero to a musical party at her luxurious house at Pio (a rented house paid for by Filippo Strozzi), to hear her sing to the lute, and also asks him to correct a book of poetry written by her "so that she should not feel ashamed of it," in much the same way as the highly-respected Vittoria Colonna or Irene di Spilimbergo might have done (in Masson 1975, 64). Thomas Coryat comments upon the musical skill of the Venetian courtesan, saying, "she will endeavour to enchaunt thee partly with her melodious notes that she warbles out upon her lute, which she fingers with as laudable a stroake as many men that are excellent professors in the noble science of Musicke; and partly with that heart-tempting harmony of her voice" (in Santore 1988, 58).

According to Richard Leppert, the lute had become a common accoutrement of prostitutes and procuresses by the seventeenth century, and it was not unusual for these women to carry lutes into public houses as a symbol of their profession (Leppert 1993, 60). Because of its association with courtesans, the lute itself acquired particular connotations of seduction. Carla Zecher examines erotic images of the lute in sixteenth-century French poetry, finding that the lute, in the poems of both male and female poets, becomes a gendered body. This gendered body is subject to rhetorical manipulations which allow for erotic double entendres as the instrument rests against a lady's bosom, is cradled in her arms, and is played upon and addressed as a lover. Or the lute can become the amorous means by which a male protagonist might win his beloved's acquiescence (Zecher 2000). Pietro Aretino describes the erotic appeal of the lute in his own experience with a courtesan, saying, "the things which Franceschina sang yesterday to the tune of her lute, penetrated my heart with so sweet a sort of musical persuasion, that I must needs come to the point of amorous conjunction" (in Santore 1988, 58).

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[14] For examples of such complaints and laws in Venice, see Rosenthal 1992, 67-74.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, before Pope Pius V's edict of 1566 that banished courtesans and prostitutes from the Holy city, Rome was known as the *terra da donne*, and the Roman courtesans were renowned for their beauty, grace and intelligence. Perhaps the most famous Roman courtesan, poet and singer was Tullia d'Aragona (c.1508-1556). Like so many girls, Tullia learned her profession from her mother, Giulia Campana, and claims she was forced into prostitution because of financial necessity. But the courtesan life gave her access to a humanist education and allowed her the freedom to exercise her literary and musical gifts. Known as the "intellectual courtesan," Tullia's cultural and humanist interests attracted literary men to the salon she hosted in her house, but it also attracted negative attention. The contemporary writer Giovanni Battista Giraldi tried to discredit her, claiming that "by selling herself to men and masquerading under false pretenses of literary gifts and intellectual interests, Tullia attracted and seduced not only the young, but even learned men of mature age"(in Masson 1975, 91). Giraldi goes on to describe how she induced them to dance "the pavane, the *rosina*, and any other dance she wished, for her amusement, while she accompanied them on her lute" and then, in the height of effrontery, refused to sleep with them (in Masson 1975, 91). Giraldi focuses on Tullia's literary and musical abilities, describing them as false and unseemly, while clearly condemning her exercise of sexual and intellectual power over men. Yet other writers admired and praised Tullia's accomplishments, seeing in her a worthy intellectual, companion and host: writer and publisher Ludovico Domenichi describes an evening at her salon where "a group of men were gathered there, and the conversation developed into a serious discussion [of] whether Petrarch had drawn upon the works of the old Provençal and Tuscan poets for his subjects" (in Masson 1975, 91). Domenichi clearly esteems Tullia's salon as a serious and valuable academic environment, quite opposite to the picture painted by Giraldi.

Tullia was famous as a poet but she was no less musically gifted; she possessed a voice "of unique charm" and was an excellent performer on the lute, as well as being able to "play so beautifully whatever instrument [she] please[d]," and read music at sight (Stambellino 1537, and Martelli 1546; in Masson 1975, 102 & 113). Her performances, both at her own salon and in other Italian *ridotti* and courts, earned her great praise. Two madrigals set by Verdelot, "Non mai donna più bella" and "Ardenti miei sospiri," celebrate Tullia d'Aragona's musical ability. These may simply be poetic flattery, but Masson offers one more piece of evidence, suggesting that "Tullia's voice and musical gifts must really have been of a high order if —lacking great beauty— she nevertheless captivated such a connoisseur of music and women as Filippo Strozzi [the great Florentine banker and friend of the Medicis including Pope Clement VII], and made him spend so much time with her in a city like Rome, where there was no short supply of beautiful courtesans" (Masson 1975, 94).

Tullia's career was a stormy one, and after a particular scandal involving a German merchant, she moved from Rome to Venice. Her Venetian circle of admirers included the historian and classicist Jacobo Nardi, who dedicated a translation of Marcus Tullius Cicero's *De Oratore* (1535) to Tullia; the esteemed dramatist Sperone Speroni made her principal figure in his *Dialogo dell'Amore* (written 1537, published 1542), which also features Bernardo Tasso, her lover and partner in Speroni's debate, as well as poets Niccolo Grazia and Francesco Maria Molza. But Tullia also made enemies, like Pietro Aretino, who called her poetry "affected Petrarchan rubbish" (*I Raggionamenti*, 1535), and Lorenzo Venier, whose epithet in *La Tariffa delle puttane di Venetia*, 1535 (a work possibly written with help from his friend Aretino) labelled Tullia "the most abject of whores." Venier's potent invective caused Tullia to once again relocate, so in 1537 she moved to Ferrara. Her arrival is recorded in a letter from Battista Stambellino to Isabella d'Este at Mantua which describes her as "most delightful, discreet and intelligent, also gifted with excellent and 'divine' manners; she can sing at sight any motet or song. In conversation she has a voice of unique charm, and carries herself so well that there is not a man or woman in these parts who is her equal. Even though that most excellent and illustrious lady the Marchioness of Pescara [Vittoria Colonna] is here, as Your Excellency knows" (letter of Jun 13, 1537; in Masson 1975, 102). The fact that Isabella d'Este, herself an amateur poet and outstanding musician, was interested in the famous Roman courtesan, shows just how successful Tullia d'Aragona's self-fashioning as a woman of high culture and intellect was —even to the point of rivalling the foremost woman of Italy, Vittoria Colonna.

While in Ferrara, Tullia was courted by Ercole Bentivoglio, son of the Duke of Bologna, and Girolamo Muzio, poet and courtier in the service of the Duke, who dedicated poems to her in his book of eclogues *Le Amorose*, and *Rime diverse,* including a group of ten poems called *Belladonna*. Tullia defended her music as much as she did her poetry and her virtue, for during her Ferrarese stay she wrote a poem challenging Berardino Ochino's sermons against music and dancing, saying that the monk was arrogantly depriving people of free will "which is one of the first and greatest gifts of God" (in Masson 1975, 103). After a brief marriage to an elderly Siennese man (which afforded her some financial stability and a respite from her profession), Tullia moved in 1545 to Florence, and in 1546 she finally succeeded in establishing the recognized literary academy she had dreamed of. Her home became a meeting-place of many notable Florentine literary figures and noblemen such as Benedetto Varchi, Lattanzio Benucci, Alessandro Arrighi, Niccolo Martelli, the poet Antonio Francesco Grazzini (known as Il Lasca), Simone Porzio, a professsor of philosophy at Pisa, Ugolino Martelli, Bishop of Glandeva, and a large number of military men including Cuppano di Montefalco, Rodolfo Baglione, Giovanbattista Savello, Don Luigi de Toledo (brother of the Duchess of Florence) and his son Don Pedro. Again, music-making was an integral part of Tullia's Florentine cultural interests. In a letter of March 6, 1546, at the beginning of what was to be a long-lasting liaison, Niccolo Martelli an "aging warrior of love" writes to Tullia who has recently arrived in Florence, praising her beauty, virtue and talents, "which fill with astonishment those who hear you sing so sweetly, and with that white and beautiful hand play so beautifully whatever instrument you please" (in Masson 1975, 113).

It was during her stay in Florence that Tullia published a collection of poems, *Rime* (1547), which included her own compositions as well as verses about her by illustrious male poets. She dedicated this first publication to the Duchess of Florence, and dedicated the opening poem to the Duke, as a thank you for the Duchess's intervention on her behalf in her petition against a law that required prostitutes to wear a yellow veil (Tullia was excused by the Duke under the justification that she was a poetess). Her poetry, for all its conventional Petrarchism, was evidently popular enough to result in four editions in the sixteenth century alone. In 1547 Tullia published *Il Dialogo dell'Infinità di Amore* but her next work, the narrative poem *Guerrin Meschino*, whose foreword expresses repentance and the desire to live as a virtuous widow, although written in Florence, was not published until after her death. Less is known about the final years of Tullia d'Aragona's life, but in 1548 she returned to Rome and to her former profession, perhaps out of financial need, and she died in poverty in 1556. As a final tribute to her musical talent, among the belongings inventoried at her death were a harpsichord, twelve books of music and a broken lute—the instrument that at once symbolized both the cultivation and sensual power of the honest courtesan.

A decade later, in Venice, Veronica Franco was making her mark in Venetian society and literary circles, and through her friendship with poet and patron Domenico Venier published a book of *terze rime* in 1575 and a book of letters in 1580. Like Tullia d'Aragona, Veronica attracted intellectual and literary patrons and friends, and was an accomplished musician, singer, and performer on the harpsichord and lute. Her book of letters reveals a few interesting details regarding her musical interest and ability. In one, Franco writes to a friend asking him to lend her his harpsichord for a few days, and, if possible, to send it to her tomorrow, as she plans to hold a musical gathering in the evening, to which she invites her correspondent and his friend Messer Vincenzo to come and listen (in Masson 1975, 163; the letter is also described in Rosenthal 1992, 317, fn. 58). Franco evidently held an informal literary and musical salon in her own home after the fashion of the day, where she may have entertained her guests with her own performance. Feldman remarks that "music was not at the top of Franco's accomplishments" (Feldman 1995, 103) but the very fact that her letters refer to making music with friends, and that she was known to be an intimate member of Domenico Venier's literary salon where music was so important, is enough to remind us of the strong connection of the cultivated courtesan with solo musical performance, in particular, the lute song. "The honest courtesan offered social and intellectual refinement in return for patronage," writes Rosenthal; "playing music, singing, composing poetry, and presenting a sophisticated figure were the courtesan's necessary, marketable skills" (Rosenthal 1992, 6). The music performed by the *cortegiane oneste* is nearly always referred to as self-accompanied solo song, and the lute figures prominently as the most fashionable accompanying instrument. As much as the performance of the northern duchesses in the earliest part of the *cinquecento*, the performance of lute songs by Italian courtesans within the fashionable salons, academies and courts across Italy confirmed the association of the Italian lute song as a woman's genre in the mid-sixteenth century.

While the performance of lute songs by the renowned intellectual courtesans of Rome and Venice further established the genre's connection to women's performance, it also contributed to a latent connotation of dangerous sensuality which surrounded female singing and the lute in particular.[15] Barbara Hanning remarks on the lute's connection to sensual power in her study of early baroque paintings, noting that while depictions of music repeatedly function as metaphors for the pleasures associated with love, "the lute was by itself often a marker for eroticism, for it connoted the potential of art-music for sexual arousal":

> One has only to think of the line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, 'If music be the food of love, play on!', or of Titian's famous paintings of 'Venus and the Lute Player'. The lute's reputation for debauchery is made explicit in the 1603 edition of Ripa's *Iconologia* . . . (Hanning 1989, 9)

Colin Slim points out similar iconographical significance in the depiction of Mary Magdalen as a lutenist. According to Slim, the Magdalen has been associated with music and dancing from early legends through the present day, an association that was heightened during the Renaissance. At least two sixteenth-century lute pieces were named after the reformed prostitute turned female saint: Pierre Attaingnant's lute arrangement of a basse dance called *La Magdalena* (1530), and Marc' Antonio del Pifaro's pavane for lute called *La Madalena* (1546). A northern Renaissance artistic tradition which commonly depicted Mary Magdalene as a lutenist and wealthy courtesan further inflated the perception of the lute as a sensual instrument; artists portrayed her as a lute-player, Slim remarks, "because [the lute's] hollow, rounded shape had widely understood erotic connotations in [that] society" (Slim 1980, 465). Slim focusses his study on five Flemish paintings by the Master of the Female Half-Lengths, all dating from the 1520s, which depict the Magdalen with a vessel of ointment, playing French court chansons on her lute. The chanson in one painting is identified as a fragment of Claudin de Sermisy's *Jouyssance vous donneray*, and in another as the two lower voices of *Si j'ayme mon amy* (Slim 1992).

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[15] See chapter four, "Hearing the Female Voice," for futher discussion of the perceived danger and sensuality inherent in female singing.

The portrayal of Mary Magdalen as a lute player reinforces the Renaissance association of the lute with sensual pleasure. In fact, several portraits of female lutenists were long thought to be pictures of courtesans, including the famous *Lute Player* by Bartolommeo Veneto. For some time the painting, a copy of which still resides in Milan, was believed to be a portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli, long-time mistress to Duke Ludovico Sforza *Il Moro*. More recently Iain Fenlon has speculated that the Veneto painting and others "are presumably to be read as portraits of a courtesan" (Fenlon 1997, 194). Typical of musical genre paintings, the young woman in Veneto's much-copied portrait looks straight at the viewer, while the partbook is also turned to face the viewer, as if inviting the onlooker "to participate in her music-making," in what Fenlon calls "part of the process of seduction" (Fenlon 1997, 194). Fenlon also notes that "it is suggestive that in two copies of the painting (in Milan and Boston), a later hand has added a halo in an attempt to transform the sitter into Saint Cecilia," or perhaps into Saint Mary Magdalen (Fenlon 1997, 194). Whatever the identity of the Veneto lute-player, there are many more paintings which leave no ambiguity as to the amorous intentions of the female lutenist portrayed, or, in many other instances, of their male instructor, listener or companion.[16]

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[16] It is interesting to note, however, that a lute-playing woman with exposed breasts may have allegorical as well as lascivious connotations, for full breasts could signify development, nourishment and both poetic and musical inspiration (the ancient poets were represented as having

In iconography, as in the popular ideology of the day, the lute, and by inference, the lute song, was connected with the cultivated courtesan, perhaps the archetypal Renaissance image of woman—beautiful and refined but dangerous in her possession of sexual power. Because of this entrenched connotation, the lute-playing woman and her music, whether in art or real life, was subject to erotic interpretation. For both the courtesan and the *donna di palazzo*, lute song performance presented an ideal vehicle for the display of both vocal and physical beauty, and the visual display of the performing body could be used to advantage. As the tutor copied by Mary Burwell in the 1670s remarks, "the beauty of the arm, of the hands and of the neck are advantageously displayed in playing of the lute" (in Zecher 2000, 769). Zecher observes that the beauty of the instrument and the beauty of the woman who plays it become conflated and intertwined: "cradled in the arms and caressed by the fingers, the lute—more than any other instrument— perfectly complemented the human form. In the hands of a Renaissance gentleman or lady it constituted more than an agent for music-making; the lute was an adornment" (Zecher 2000, 771). The lute was the symbol of the cultivated courtly lady, and also of the seductive courtesan. "There was a contradiction inherent in the common pictorial image of the Renaissance lady with her lute, for the instrument made her at once respectable and desirable" (Zecher 2000, 772).

The connection of the lute with female beauty and seduction, and a prevalent ideology which saw a dangerous sensuality in the performing woman, contributed to gendered associations of the Italian lute song. Although composition by women within the genre was slim compared with the large outpouring of male composers, performance conventions clearly favoured female performers. The presence of women lutenist-singers in Italian academies in opposition to groups of male amateurs performing unaccompanied polyphonic madrigals, the evidence of a continuous tradition of female performance throughout the century in an age where male musicians were more frequently seen as composers first and performers and teachers second, and the strong connection of lute-

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suckled at the breast of the muse); see Coelho's discussion of paintings involving female figures performing a "lacteal baptism" of musical instruments (Coelho 1992).

playing with the courtesan tradition, confirms a prevalence of gendered thinking which coloured lute song performance and characterized this enduring practice as a woman's genre.

Chapter Seven

Concerti di Donne — 'Professional' singers in the late sixteenth century?

In his attack on the *seconda prattica* of Claudio Monteverdi and others (*Dialogue* 1600), Giovanni Maria Artusi notably uses metaphors which perceive the music of the late sixteenth century as feminine. Suzanne Cusick observes within Artusi's rhetoric a "complex fabric of explicit and implicit gender references in Artusi's several attacks on the imperfections of modern music, references that constitute an attempt to discredit modern music as unnatural, feminine, and feminizing of both its practitioners and its listeners" (Cusick 1993, 3). Cusick acknowledges that Artusi's attack on the dissonance practice and mixed modes of Monteverdi's latest compositions may have been couched in feminizing rhetoric because they were associated with "change, an unsettling force then understood as feminine," but there were also other prominent social and musical factors currently at work which linked the new style of madrigal, with women (Cusick 1993, 17). The increased participation of women in the performance of secular vocal music of the late *cinquecento* and their resounding popularity established secular music performance from the 1570s on as residing solidly within the domain of female music-making, and allowed women performers to move into more public and professional venues of musical practice. Along with this increased acceptance of women performers, an associated shift in the social function of the madrigal which changed over the course of the century "from a participatory, chamber genre whose pleasures were meant to be enjoyed by the performers alone to a dramatic, professionalized one whose pleasures were aimed at a nonperforming audience," contributed to what Artusi saw as a "disturbing change" in the gender associations of secular art music (Cusick 1993, 17).

The most famous female singers of the Italian *cinquecento* are undoubtedly the members of the *concerto delle donne* of the Ferrarese court. Admired by all who heard them and mentioned in many treatises and records of the era, the 'Singing Ladies' of the court of Ferrara enjoyed an immense popularity in the 1570s, 80s and 90s, and are perhaps most representative of the new vogue enjoyed by female performers in late sixteenth-century Italy. As we have seen, women sang at court throughout the sixteenth century; thus the performance of women singers in the late *cinquecento* at courts and palaces in Ferrara, Mantua, Florence and Rome is not remarkable in itself. However, the immense popularity, special treatment and elevated social status afforded to virtuoso singers of the late *cinquecento* attests to a new and powerful perception of the female singer. The chamber performances which were regularly held at the Ferrarese ducal palace were distinguished by an unprecedented virtuosic musical excellence, and the superior solo and ensemble singing of the *concerto delle donne* engendered a fascination with female singing which characterized secular music at the Ferrarese court for three decades, fostered the growth of rival female *concerti* in Mantua, Florence, Ferrara and Rome, and influenced secular music composition as never before. The number and quality of female singers in Italy, and their continuing acceptance into mainstream musical society which we have seen grow steadily from the beginning of the century, reached its apex in the 1590s with the *virtuose* of the Italian court and stage.

Concerti di Donne, Their Nature and Membership

The duchy of Ferrara, governed since the thirteenth century by the ancient and noble Este family, had a long history of musical excellence, and this tradition was certainly upheld by the last Duke, Alfonso II, who ruled from 1559 until his death in 1597. Throughout the reign of Alfonso and his three wives music played a very important role at court, as it always had done for the Estensi.[1] The Duke maintained a large chapel choir and instrumental ensemble, and was patron to more than twenty-one Ferrarese composers, many of whom supplied music for the important court theatre; Anthony Newcomb reports that the "Este *cappella di musica* . . . was one of the largest and most splendid music establishments in Italy" (Newcomb 1970, 51). But Duke Alfonso's most celebrated music ensemble was the *concerto delle donne*, who sang for the court's private chamber music concerts, known as the *musica secreta*.

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[1] Alfonso's three wives were Lucrezia de' Medici (married 1558), Barbara of Austria (married 1566, died 1572), and Margherita Gonzaga (1564-1618, married 1579).

Though the fame of Ferrara's *concerto delle donne* is unquestioned, the exact compilation and function of the group is somewhat clouded by historical lacuni and scholarly confusion. The first musicological work to bring the Ferrarese *concerto* to academic attention is Alfred Einstein's monumental treatise, *The Italian Madrigal*. Einstein's work takes its material primarily from Solerti's 1899 history *Ferrara e al corte Estense*. In his chapter on Ferrara, Einstein singles out three ladies, Lucrezia Bendidio, Laura Peverara, and Tarquinia Molza, calling them "three Singing Birds at Alfonso's court," and somewhat erroneously combines them into a single ensemble (Einstein 1949, II:723). In fact, there were at least eight ladies —members of the varying duchesses' households— who performed as chamber musicians for the Ferrarese court over the three decades of the *concerto*'s existence, and the group went through various mutations and peaks of popularity.

The most comprehensive investigative work on the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* is Anthony Newcomb's *The Madrigal at Ferrara (1579-1597)* (1980). Newcomb not only presents the biographical details of the members of the Ferrarese and rival *concerti*, correcting the mistakes made by Einstein and others, he also enlivens the context of the Ferrarese court, and finally he explores the plethora of music that was either written specifically for or inspired by these popular female singers. Newcomb's thorough investigation must form the basis of this and any subsequent studies of the *concerto delle donne*. Following the example of Adriano Cavicchi (biographer and editor of Luzzasco Luzzasschi's musical works), Newcomb divides the Ferrarese chamber music establishment into two distinct periods, taking as his point of division the marriage of Duke Alfonso II to his third wife, the young Margherita Gonzaga, in 1579. According to Newcomb, the core of the earlier group, active during the 1570s, included Leonora di Scandiano, Vittoria Bentivoglio, Lucrezia Bendidio and Isabella Bendidio; while Laura Peverara, Livia d'Arco, Anna Guarini and Tarquinia Molza made up the second group. Newcomb sees the two groups as mutually exclusive, and in fact declares that "contemporary witnesses to the formation of the new group in 1580 saw such a difference between the two groups as to dwell continually on the newness of the second without ever explicitly connecting it with the first" (Newcomb 1970, 40). However, an overlap in the function, direction, and (to some extent) personnel of the Ferraraese *musica secreta* supports a view that positions the singing ladies of Ferrara within a continuous tradition of female music making.

The earliest reference to female ensemble singing at the Ferrarese court in the second half of the *cinquecento* appears in a letter written by Canigiani, the Florentine ambassador to the Este court, on August 14, 1571, describing a musical entertainment held in honour of the Emperor Maximillian II's sons. The festivities, which lasted "from dusk till late at night," included dancing in the German and Italian styles, the performance of a 60-piece Ferrarese ensemble of instrumentalists and vocalists, and the performance of a few songs by Lucrezia and Isabella Bendidio, who sang both separately and together to the harpsichord accompaniment of Luzzasco Luzzaschi. Canigiani's description corroborates this accompanied solo and duet style: "and behind a gravicembalo played by Luzzasco, the Signora Lucrezia and the Signora Isabella Bendidio sang by turns and together, so well and so delightfully that I do not believe that I shall ever hear anything better" (Canigiani, letter of August 14, 1571; in Einstein 1949 II:828). From this event until around 1580, virtuosic vocal concerts given by the Bendidio sisters along with other ladies of the Duchess of Urbino Lucretia d'Este's court at Ferrara frequently attract the attention of visiting ambassadors and court chroniclers. In December of 1577 the Florentine ambassador Canigiani describes an evening of music-making in the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino, where he heard "Signor Giulio Cesare Brancaccio sing in the company of—that is together with— [*in compagnia sive concerto*] Signora Lucrezia Bendidio, Contessa Leonora di Scandiano and Signora Vittoria Bentivoglio" (Canigiani, letter of December 14, 1577; in Newcomb 1970, 18).

Leonora di Scandiano and Vittoria Bentivoglio were both in the service of Duchess Lucretia d'Este and are mentioned along with Lucrezia and Isabella Bendidio in Cavicchi's introduction to his edition of *Madrigali . . . per cantare, et sonare a uno, e doi, e tre soprani* by Luzzasco Luzzaschi (Rome 1601; Cavicchi ed. 1965). Cavicchi describes these four women as the most important performers of the ensemble of the first period: "Gli esecutori più importanti che diedero vita a questo complesso nel primo periodo furono: Lucrezia e Isabella Bendidio, Leonora di Scandiano e Vittoria Bentivoglio" (Cavicchi 1965, 9). Leonora Sanvitale came to Ferrara from Rome in January 1576. She had made the journey, along with her stepmother, Barbara Sanseverino (wife of Giberto Sanvitale, Count of Sala, who would later become the mistress of Prince Vincenzo Gonzaga), in order to marry Giulio Tiene, Conte di Scandiano. Tasso's sonnet, "Tolse Barbara gentil," was dedicated to the Countess of Sala some years earlier, indicating that the Scandiano women had attracted a reputation as women of merit, and perhaps of musical talent. Less is known about Vittoria Bentivoglio, the daughter of the noble Cybo family, who joined the Ferrarese court some time between 1574 (the occasion when only Isabella and Lucrezia Bendidio are mentioned as singing) and 1577. Together with the Bendidio sisters, Leonora Scandiano and Vittoria Bentivoglio formed the core of the singers in the first Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*.

A description by Leonardo Conosciuti of an evening's entertainment at the court held in February 1579 reveals that other ladies besides the four prominent women already mentioned sometimes took part in these musical soirées:

> Tuesday evening, after having danced a bit, all the high nobility retired to the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino. All the Bendidio ladies and all the Scandiano ladies as well as Signora Bradamante were asked in, and then the doors were closed, leaving all the others out in the cold. The above-mentioned ladies were then asked to sing, each one separately and then all together. It was, as far as I have understood, a very lovely thing to hear, the affair having been rehearsed beforehand with the participation of messer Luzzasco, Marchesa Bentivoglio, Signora Machiavella, Signora Vittoria, the sister of the Count of Tiene, and Marcia married to Signor Anguellino. (Conosciuti, letter of February 4, 1579; in Newcomb 1970, 10).

Here some new names arise in connection with a concert of female vocalists. Signora Bradamante was the daughter of Duke Alfonso's uncle, Don Francesco d'Este, who together with her sister Marfisa and some ladies of their households, frequented the Duchess of Urbino's court. Newcomb clarifies the identity of "Marcia married to Signor

Anguellino" as Signora Ginevra Marcia d'Anguellino, a member of the court of Donna Marfisa d'Este (who was married to Aldebrano Cybo, Marchese di Carrara), and speculates that the "sister of the Count of Tiene" (Giulio Tiene, the husband of Leonora Sanvitale di Scandiano), might be Camilla; both ladies are mentioned in other descriptions of Ferrarese entertainments as admirable dancers. Although the singing of the four main participants, Isabella and Lucrezia Bendidio, Vittoria Bentivoglio and Leonora di Scandiano, is mentioned more often in contemporary correspondence, it is clear that several other ladies connected with the Ferrarese court may well have taken part in the musical gatherings which were held in the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino with growing frequency throughout the late 1570s.

Duke Alfonso's sister, Lucretia d'Este, the Duchess of Urbino, seems to have presided over these musical entertainments, as she acted as mistress of the Ferrarese court (Alfonso's second wife, Barbara of Austria, having died in 1572) after returning to live with her brother upon her estrangement from her husband Duke Francesco Maria della Rovere in 1576. Duke Alfonso appears as an avid admirer of the female *concerto*, but the activities seem to be instigated by the women of the court. The Neapolitan basso Giulio Cesare Brancaccio also performed on occasion with the Bendidio, Bentivoglio, and Scandiano ladies, as he was to do with the second-period ensemble, and the *concerto* was directed by first organist and court composer Luzzasco Luzzaschi who functioned as a sort of *maestro di camera*, while the position of *maestro di cappella* was filled by Ippolito Fiorino. Edmond Strainchamps notes that Luzzaschi's "authority was equal to that of the court *maestro di cappella*, Ippolito Fiorini; in fact, Duke Alfonso II's musical establishment was so large that it required two *maestri di cappella*, which in effect it had" (Strainchamps 2001, 395).

In 1579, the forty-five-year-old Duke Alfonso married a fifteen-year-old Mantuan princess, Margherita Gonzaga, in the hopes of getting an heir with this, his third, wife, and soon after her arrival at the Ferrarese court, the nature and membership of the *concerto delle donne* began to change. The young, vivacious Margherita possessed a keen love of dancing, music and theatre, and it was with the ladies of her court (rather than those of the

Duchess of Urbino), some that she brought with her from Mantua, some recruited by Alfonso for their excellent voices, that a new *musica secreta* was formed. Newcomb attributes the formation of this new ensemble solely to the Duke's premeditated design: "partly to please her love of festivity, largely to please his own dreams of musical splendor, Alfonso attracted during the next four years four new sopranos to the court at Ferrara. It was these four ladies —Laura Peverara, Tarquinia Molza, Anna Guarini, and Livia d'Arco— who established the wide fame of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*" (Newcomb 1970, 40). Some of the responsibility must be laid at the foot of the young Duchess Margherita, whose inordinate love of music and dancing matched the Duke's own, and who felt the need to establish her place as mistress of the court of Ferrara, a place formerly held by her still resident sister-in-law the Duchess of Urbino. Iain Fenlon acknowledges Margherita's participation in the development of the *concerto delle donne*, remarking that "the formation of the more prestigious second *concerto delle donne* seems to have been inspired by Margherita Gonzaga. . . . Margherita was keenly interested in music, dancing and the theatre, and her influence on the social activities of the Este court seem to have been considerable" (Fenlon 1980, 126).

The formation of a new ensemble of female singers developed as the Duke and Duchess sought out suitable ladies-in-waiting to augment those Margherita had brought from Mantua. The first concrete evidence that Duke Alfonso was active in recruiting female singers to his new bride's court is found in the correspondence surrounding Laura Peverara's move to Ferrara. In 1580, the Duke reputedly saw Peverara and heard her sing, and immediately offered her a position as lady-in-waiting to his new duchess; she arrived at Ferrara in May of that year.[2] Also in 1580 Giulio Cesare Brancaccio negotiated a return to the Ferrarese court, and the Duke engaged his services on the understanding that "he is not to talk of his miracles of war, but rather to take part now and then in a *musica secreta*, which is being prepared by some ladies of the court" (letter from ambassador Urbani of

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[2] The details of Peverara's hiring are outlined in letters of the Florentine Ambassador Urbani from March to May of 1580, transcribed in Newcomb 1970.

October 31, 1580; in Newcomb 1970, 21, fn. 1).[3] On November 20 of that year, the court secretary mentioned in a letter to the Duke that the Duchess of Ferrara had on the previous evening been to the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino, where she heard Peverara and Guarini sing. The concerts of the lady singers is still taking place in the music rooms of the Duchess of Urbino, although the singers are now from the household of the Duchess of Ferrara.

Anna Guarini, daughter of poet and court secretary Gian Battista Guarini and Taddea Bendidio, was raised within the Ferrarese court and may have sung in *musica secreta* concerts prior to the November 1580 concert, for there was likely some degree of overlap in the two performing ensembles. This perhaps accounts for the confusion of Einstein and other scholars such as Valdrighi, for example, who lists Anna Guarini as singing along with her aunts, Lucrezia and Isabella Bendidio. Valdrighi erroneously implies that Tarquinia Molza was also active at court at the same time, although, as he correctly notes, in the capacity of director rather than singer:

> Gifted with a most beautiful voice and an expert in the art of music, she [Lucrezia Bendidio] and her sister Isabella always had the main part in the grandiose concerts which, from 1571 to 1584, under the direction of the famous Luzzasco Luzzaschi and of Tarquinia Molza, delighted the court of Ferrara. The two sisters Bendidio and Anna Guarini, a cavalier's daughter who later joined the court, served the duchess as chamber musicians and amazed everyone by their improvised singing of any motto or composition that was suggested to them. (Valdrighi, *Atti a men*, serie III, vol. II, parte II, in Einstein II:539-40)

Anna Guarini officially entered the service of Duchess Margherita on December 1, 1580, and Brancaccio arrived on Dec 25; from this point on Peverara, Guarini and Brancaccio are featured as the main participants in the new *musica secreta*.

Newcomb observes that the new *concerto delle donne* was performing regularly by Carnival season of 1581, and that Peverara and Brancaccio are singled out in most accounts. During 1580 and 1581 only Peverara, Brancaccio and Guarini are mentioned by name, but the Florentine ambassador Urbani frequently describes the private entertainment "of some ladies of the Court —especially Peverara— and Brancaccio," which he calls alternately *la musica secreta*, *la musica delle dame*, or *il concerto delle donne* (in Newcomb 1970, 43 and 39). By June 1581, the female singing group had lost some of its novelty, as Urbani's dispatches to Florence simply refer to "the usual music of the ladies" (letter of June 26, 1581; in Newcomb 1970, 46). In Urbani's eyewitness account of August 1581, when he was at last admitted to hear the *musica secreta,* there clearly are more than two female singers as well as several instrumentalists involved in the entertainment:

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[3] Newcomb infers from these letters and other court records that Brancaccio was first at the court of Ferrara in 1577 but left for some unknown reason in 1579 only to return a year later.

> Immediately after dining, a game of *primiera* [a card game] was begun in which the Duke, the Duchess [of Ferrara], Donna Marfisa, the wife of Signor Cornelio [Isabella Bendidio], and myself took part. . . . At the same time music was begun, so that it was necessary for me simultaneously to play cards, to listen, to admire, and to praise the *passaggi*, the *cadenze*, the *tirate*, and such things— all of which matters I understand little and enjoy less. This party did not last one minute less than four hours, since, after some other ladies had sung, Signora Peverara (the Mantuan about whom I have written in the past) finally appeared and, under the pretext of having me hear first one thing and then another, both by herself and together with other singers, with one and with several instruments, stretched the affair out as much as possible. (Urbani, letter of August 1581; in Newcomb 1970, 47)

Although not mentioned by name, there are clearly more female musicians involved in this lengthy musical entertainment than the star of the show, Peverara. Newcomb speculates that the other ladies who sang in August 1581 may have been Anna Guarini and Livia d'Arco. D'Arco, a young lady-in-waiting whom Duchess Margherita brought with her from Mantua, is first mentioned as singing with the new *concerto* in a letter of 1582, where she is mentioned as a recent addition to the group: "that young girl d'Arco is doing very well," Cavalier Grana writes, "and has a beautiful voice" (in Newcomb 1980, 10-11). From 1582 on, d'Arco progresses as a singer and viol player to become a core member of the *concerto delle donne*.

Although it is possible that some of the Bendidio and Scandiano ladies who sang in the 1570s may have been among the additional female singers mentioned in larger concerts such as ambassador Urbani witnessed in August 1581, there is evidence that by this year, only one year after the arrival of Peverara, the former singing ladies were no longer part of the *musica secreta*. Firstly, Urbani notes that Isabella Bendidio ("the wife of Signor Cornelio") is among the listeners who are playing cards, rather than among the performers. A letter from July of the same year observes her sister Lucrezia Bendidio's reaction to the popularity of the new singing ladies, saying that "Signora Machiavella resents this somewhat" as she is no longer asked to participate.[4] Of Lucrezia Bendidio, Einstein writes, "her musical supremacy at the court remained uncontested until the Duke's third marriage, to Margherita Gonzaga, brought her a dangerous rival in Laura Peperara" (Einstein 1949, II:826). Certainly the outstanding new *virtuosa* created some bitterness by supplanting the formerly admired Bendidio sisters as the *prima donna* of the court.

Newcomb observes the changeover in the personnel of the *concerto delle donne* as a result of the superior musicality of the new ladies-in-waiting: "these ladies [members of the first concerto] did not leave the court with the arrival of the new *concerto delle donne* in 1580," he notes, rather "the Bendidio sisters, the Scandiano ladies, Vittoria Bentivoglio, and the others remain prominent members of the court. They were simply replaced as singers by other ladies more fitted for and more thoroughly committed to their role as singers in the court life" (Newcomb 1980, 10). Newcomb attributes the dissolution of the first group to the Duke's musical ambition, which caused him to search out more excellent singers. "By 1580," writes Newcomb, "Duke Alfonso seems to have decided that his group of singing ladies as it was then constituted would be incapable of realizing the bolder artistic plans that he had come to have for it, just as it would be of fulfilling the larger place in court entertainment that he now saw for it" (Newcomb 1980, 20). Yet beyond engaging Peverara and inviting Brancaccio back to court, the Duke left the direction of the *musica secreta* up to its musical director Luzzaschi. It was Luzzaschi's energy and impetus that confirmed the decision to use new singers in place of the Bendidio and Scandiano ladies. A letter of February 7, 1582, from the courtier Giacomo Grana to Cardinal Luigi d'Este, confirms that the previous group of female singers had lost their prominent place in court entertainments due to Luzzaschi's preference for Peverara and Guarini:

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[4] Letter of July 26, 1581, from Cavalier Giacomo Grana to Lugi d'Este concerns a Polish gentleman visiting court, "for whose pleasure the Duke presented *la musica di quelle signore* who grow better every day, Signora Machiavella resents this somewhat, since one does not ask her to learn any new things" (in Newcomb 1980, 10).

> In the evening . . . was presented the *musica delle dame* of the Duchess; the same was done yesterday evening in the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino, where I was able to enjoy it. Certainly those ladies improve every day, singing as well as one could imagine. Signora Machiavella, Signora Isabella, and Signora Vittoria have abandoned the field, having lost the backing of Luzzaschi, who truly is extraordinarily rich in invention. (In Newcomb 1980, 10-11)

The gradual consolidation of the second *concerto delle donne* and the fact that the Duke's growing obsession with his singing ladies was little in evidence before 1581, attests to a gradual absorption with virtuosic singing on the part of the Duke, aided by serendipitous circumstances and the enthusiasm of his chief *maestro di camera*, rather than a premeditated "bold artistic plan" suddenly put into action.

In 1583 Tarquinia Molza joined the group as singer and director, and the *concerto delle donne* assumed its primary form. With Peverara who played the harp, Guarini on the lute, d'Arco learning the viol, and Molza or Luzzaschi on harpsichord, the ensemble was capable of performing a variety of music, ranging from *a cappella* madrigals (utilising Brancaccio, Luzzaschi, Fiorini and perhaps other male singers including a certain mysterious young tenor, Antonio da Lugo, who was stabbed and killed soon after his debut at the Ferrarese court) to instrumental accompanied solos, duets and trios, to performances with the Ferrarese *concerto grande*. In a letter of December 11, 1582 Conosciuto records, "yesterday evening the *concerto grande* was heard, accompanied by the voices of those ladies, and all the gentlemen were permitted to enter [the room]—even a pair of French gentlemen who are hear to learn horseback riding" (in Newcomb 1980, 34).[5] Apart from the participation of Luzzaschi and Fiorini, there is no evidence that any of the *cappella* singers (including several admired castrati) ever participated with the ladies in the *musica secreta*.

Even though the new members were ladies of the Duchess of Ferrara's household, the concerts of the *musica secreta* were typically still held in the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino. Cavalier Giacomo Grana describes a sort of music room "in the rooms of the Duchess of Urbino . . . where ordinarily there is an instrument tuned, like the one in the rooms of the Duchess [of Ferrara], so that it is always in a key [at the proper pitch level?] for the angelic voices, which I savored for a bit from the door" (letter from Cavalier Giacomo Grana to Luigi d'Este of March 7, 1582; in Newcomb 1980, 27). Occasional eyewitnesses record concerts in the rooms of the Duchess of Ferrara as well as in the gardens of the ducal palace or summer house. As members of the court, the *concerto delle donne* also occasionally traveled with the Duke and the Duchess on important visits; for instance, they were taken to Mantua where they performed for Margherita's family in 1581.

Not only did Duchess Margherita take a keen interest in the *concerto delle donne*,[6] but she was the instigator of another regular court entertainment which involved the ladies of her household, including Laura Peverara and Anna Guarini —the *balletti di dame*. In 1580 Margherita gratified her love of dance by forming with some of her ladies-in-waiting a female dance group which regularly performed carefully choreographed and rehearsed *balletti* in costume, sometimes involving a theatrical plot. Formerly in Ferrarese dispatches, Newcomb notes, the term *balletto* is used "with the original sense of a little dance (perhaps with masks) . . . [which] involved both men and women of the court and would seem still to be a rather spontaneous form of social dance" (Newcomb 1970, 61). After Margherita's arrival at court, however, the *balletti* described by visiting ambassadors and eye-witnesses comprise carefully choreographed performances by the Duchess and up to twelve ladies of her court.

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[5] The *concerto grande* was a large court orchestra which at times comprised over sixty voices and instruments; it had been functioning since the 1570s. Urbani's comments make the size of the ensemble seem unremarkable for he comments in 1583 that "the *concerto grande* . . . will take place this week and is supposed to include fifty participants. Here they consider that a stupendous thing. Perhaps they will not feel so after they have heard that in Florence such performances include 100" (in Newcomb 1970, 56).

[6] The Duchess of Ferrara looked after her prized singing ladies; a letter of 1581 details her concern for their health and welfare: "The Duchess remained [i.e. she did not go to dinner in the rooms of the Duchess of Urbino], explaining that she wanted to make sure that the sick ladies were well taken care of. La Peverara is better, but La Guarina is not" (Letter of September 20, 1581, from Cavalier Grana to Luigi d'Este; in Newcomb 1980, 26).

Reports of this *balletto di dame* and their beautiful, elaborate dances are as numerous as descriptions of the *concerto delle donne*. The records describe elaborate costuming which often involved some cross-dressing, as no men were admitted to the *balletto*'s membership. On one occasion eight ladies dressed as shepherds and shepherdesses, and in a "grand ballet" performed for the wedding of Laura Peverara, "the Duchess and eleven other ladies dressed partly in black as gentlemen and partly in white as ladies" and "made rather a beautiful sight" (Urbani, dispatch of 23 February 1583; in Newcomb 1970, 66). The dances themselves ranged from a *pavane alla spagnuola* danced by the Duchess and Donna Marfisa in 1581 to "a grand ballet" performed by the Duchess and eleven other ladies, and could be accompanied by musicians singing madrigals, music for instruments and voices, the *concerto grande*, or simply a pipe and tabour or tambourine. For one occasion during the Carnival of February 1585, we are given details as to the complement of instruments used, as well as the composer and author of the songs:

> That night there was a party in the *gran sala* and they did the *balletti* a 12, with stupendous plumes ordered by the Duke himself. They say that it was a most beautiful thing to see, but that the violins, harpsichords, and organs could be heard only with difficulty [in the large hall]. The words sung were extremely graceful and composed by Signor Guarini; the music, composed by Fiorino, did them justice; and the dancing was so perfectly accommodated to the one and to the other that it was a heavenly thing. (In Newcomb 1970, 68).

The court composer, court poet, chamber singers and musicians of the ducal *cappella,* and all collaborated in these gala productions conceived by the Duchess herself. Even the Duke got involved on one occasion by ordering "stupendous plumes" for the ladies' costumes.

There is no concrete evidence that the *concerto delle donne* performed in conjunction with the *balletto*, although singing and dancing did occur simultaneously, and some of the ladies participated in both groups. Interestingly, we are often told the names of the dancers, and several times the *balletti* involve the former singers of the first *concerto delle donne*. The Duchess always seems to take part, along with her chief dancer Donna Marfisa d'Este. Along with these two main participants, Signora Bradamante d'Este, Laura Peverara, Ginevra Marcia, Vittoria Bentivoglio, at least one of the Scandiana ladies (the "La Scandiana" referred to in a letter of January 1582 could be Leonora Sanvitale who died three months later), Anna Guarini, Camilla Mosti, and a lady known only as La Suarda were involved in the new dance group, which Newcomb calls "a showcase for the beautiful and talented ladies of [the Duchess's] court" (Newcomb 1970, 69).

In addition to the overlap of personnel between the *concerto delle donne* and the *balletti di dame*, a further confusing point in the history of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* is brought in by the operation of a third group of singing ladies at Ferrara. In 1589 Duke Alfonso d'Este's sister, Lucretia, who was estranged from her husband and living at the Ferrarese Ducal Palace, formed a chamber ensemble which comprised both female singers and instrumentalists, including the three musical Avogadri sisters, the organist Vincenzo Bonizzi, and one member who was described not as a singer but as a player of the *viola bastarda*. While in the early 1580s the Duchess of Ferrara was content to hear her ladies sing in the *musica secreta* concerts given in the Duchess of Urbino's apartments, by 1589 she reserved the right to hold the concerts in her own apartments, causing Lucretia d'Este to establish her own musical ensemble. The young Duchess of Ferrara was finally asserting her position as first lady of the Ferrarese court, and she particularly meant to teach the Duke's sister her place. Camillo Albani observed in 1587 that "although their Highnesses of Ferrara and Urbino are sisters-in-law, nonetheless they dispute between themselves both precedence and power and are like vipers when they have the opportunity to wound each other. In their private lives they are continually squared off against the other. As a result, any pleasure that His excellency [the Duke of Ferrara] might give to the Duchess of Urbino would be a great insult to the Duchess of Ferrara" (in Newcomb 1980, 102). The rival *concerto delle donne* established by the Duchess of Urbino was performing regularly by 1589. In June of that year, one of Lucretia's ladies sang to the accompaniment of various instruments for the visit of Mario Bevilacqua, and in August, the Duchess invited Alfonso Fontanelli to hear "her Signora Vittoria who performs miracles" (in Newcomb 1980, 102).

The regular concerts of both *musica secreta* ensembles as well as the Ferrarese *balletto di dame* were brought abruptly to an end when Duke Alfonso died without a recognized heir in 1597. Upon Alfonso II's death, the duchy of Ferrara returned to Papal rule, and the Este court at Ferrara was dissolved. Many Ferrarese musicians were dismissed at this time, or else left the court of their own volition. Interestingly, several of the musical and theatrical enterprises in Ferrara were sustained by local academies or the cathedral after Duke Alfonso's death, and there is some evidence that Laura Peverara and Livia d'Arco continued to sing together on various occasions.[7] But the famous *concerto delle donne* whose fame had captured all of Italy was finally silenced by the death of its patron.

Ferrara's *concerto delle donne* is by far the most well-known individual vocal group of Renaissance Italy, but it was not unique unto itself. In fact the singing ladies of Ferrara were so popular that soon other courts, including Mantua, Florence and Rome, established female singing ensembles modeled on Ferrara's example. The first imitation *concerto delle donne* was founded by Grand Duke Francesco in Florence. After Giulio Caccini returned from a visit to the Ferarrese court in 1583 raving about Alfonso II's three sopranos, Grand Duke Francesco was obsessed with starting a *musica secreta* of his own, and soon a rival group under the direction of Caccini, and including his wife Lucia, was begun. In April of 1584, we find the first record of female *virtuosi* singing at the Florentine court, "In the evening, before dinner, there was musical entertainment . . . by a Bolognese woman of the Grand Duchess, who was extraordinary, by a certain Vittoria who had come from Rome, and by other famous musicians" (description of the wedding of Vincenzo Gonzaga and Leonora de' Medici; in Newcomb 1980, 90). In the summer of 1584, a series of letters from Alessandro Striggio in Ferrara to the Grand Duke reveal that Striggio was secretly composing music for the Florentine *concerto* inspired by the singing that he heard in Ferrara. On October 19, 1587, however, Grand Duke Francesco and his devoted wife Bianca Cappello both died within hours of each other, and the duchy passed to Francesco's brother Cardinal Ferdinand de' Medici. Wishing to install his own personnel, the new Grand Duke dismissed various members of the court, including several musicians, and the *concerto delle donne* underwent a transitional period. The record of the Ferrarese ambassador at Florence details the *concerto*'s membership during the summer of 1588:

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[7] Peverara remained in Ferrara after the dissolution of the court, where she continued to live and perform; she is buried in the Jesuit church of Ferrara.

> His Highness will have here several ladies who sing quite well: La Luccesina, the daughter of Antonio Bernardi who was the wife of Bellati, La Bovia, La Vittoria, whom His Highness has brought from Rome, the wife of Giulio Romano, and a girl whom His Highness has also brought from Rome, who has a most beautiful and most delicate voice, and whom His Highness is having most diligently schooled. Nevertheless, His Highness continues to hire more musicians and has given the supervision of them to S[ignor] Emilio [de'] Cavalieri, a Roman gentleman an a great favorite of His Highness. (In Newcomb 1980, 92)

The Roman Vittoria who sang at the 1584 wedding celebrations and is mentioned again in the roster of female musicians of 1588 is Vittoria Archilei (1550-c.1625), a *virtuosa* who was well known in the Roman courts. Her husband, singer and lutenist Antonio Archilei, was in the service of cardinals Alessandro Sforza and Ferdinando de' Medici in Rome, thus Vittoria had a prominent connection with the Medici household, both in Rome and in Florence. She was a member of the first *concerto delle donne* of Grand Duke Francesco at Florence in 1584, and when Francesco and his wife Bianca Cappella died in 1587, Vittoria stayed on in the service of the new Grand Duke, Ferdinando.

In 1589, Vittoria also sang with a Roman *concerto* formed under the patronage of Virginio Orsini and his wife Flavia Peretti; Orsini was the nephew of Ferdinando de' Medici and an intimate of the Florentine court. Newcomb observes that in the early 1590s, "the young ladies in the circle of Maria de' Medici and the wife of Virgnio Orsini, Flavia Peretti, were assembling a concerto di donne of their own in Rome" (Newcomb 1987, 98-99). Not much is known of the activities of this Roman singing ensemble, but female singing continued to be prized in Roman circles, and as late as 1609 a similar *musica secreta* was still maintained by Enzo Bentivoglio (see Newcomb 1977). Vittoria seems to have moved back and forth between Rome and Florence throughout her career. The same year that she was involved in the Roman *concerto*, she also performed in the *intermedio*, *La Pellegrina*, for Ferdinando's and Christine of Lorraine's wedding. She is described at this event as accompanying herself on the lute and improvising elaborate ornamentation on a solo composed especially for her by Emilio de' Cavalieri. There are many accounts of her singing "with her usual grace and angelic voice" (Jacopo Cicognini, 1611) in Rome and Florence, in academies, private settings and festive dramatic productions. She was praised by poets and composers who were "proud to claim that Archilei had favored their music by performing it" (Cook & LaMay 1984, 132), and Vincenzo Giustiniani described her as "the famous Vittoria" who had "originated the true method of singing for females" (in Bowers 1987, 122).

The Florentine *concerto* underwent further transition in 1589 when the new Grand Duke Ferdinand, by now divested of his Cardinal's robes, married Christine de Lorraine. The "Bolognese woman" Laura Bovia was let go as the Grand Duke reportedly "did not want her to be in the Palace when the Grand Duchess arrives, saying that he would be worried lest [Bovia] gossip to [the Grand Duchess] about all kinds of things" (letter of Ambassador Cortile, March 27, 1589; in Newcomb 1980, 92). Bovia, who had been a lady-in-waiting to the former Grand Duchess Bianca Cappella, was told that she must either marry, enter a convent or return home. She chose the latter, and married later in 1592.

Female ensemble singing lasted for quite a long time at the Florentine court, much longer than at Ferrara or Mantua. The first *concerto delle donne* established in 1584 had been under the direction of Giulio Caccini, but clearly Caccini was out of favour with the new Grand Duke, for in January 1588 Caccini's duties and those of his family were reorganized — "although His Highness has left Giulio Romano his salary, he has taken away that of his wife. This seemed rather strange, because the said young lady was thought to be very good"— and by August 1588 Emilio de' Cavalieri, "a Roman gentleman and great favorite of His Highness" was leading the *musica secreta* (Ambassador Cortile, letters of January 2 and August 13, 1588; in Newcomb 1980, 91). During the 1590s a female *concerto* seems to have been used only on special occasions, and Cavalieri observes that "Ferdinand had at this time no great desire for a *musica secreta* of his own" (letter of December 1593; in Newcomb 1980, 93). Rather, it was the Grand Duchess Christine de Lorraine who kept female singing flourishing in Florence. Under her patronage Caccini eventually formed "Le donne di Giulio Romano"—a group which included his second wife, Margherita della Scala, his two daughters, Francesca and Settimia, and occasional pupils, as well as Caccini himself and his son, Pompeo. Caccini and the Grand Duchess Christine went to some lengths to ensure that his daughters' physical and artistic maturity did not break up the group, but Settimia's departure for Lucca and Mantua in 1611 ended the ensemble. "Le donne di Giulio Romano" was eventually replaced by a group described in court diaries as "la sig[nor]a Francesca e le sue figliuole" (Francesca Caccini and her pupils), who continued to perform chamber music for women's voices, including compositions by Francesca Caccini, until the late 1620s.

Besides the Florentine and Roman female singers, another important *concerto delle donne* was established at Mantua by Vincenzo Gonzaga, who was a great admirer of his sister and brother-in-law's *musica secreta*. In 1581-82 an attempt was made to put together an imitation of the famous Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* especially for the occasion of Vincenzo Gonzago's marriage to Margherita Farnese. Negotiations were begun to bring Laura Bovia, "a Bolognese woman of angelic voice," to the Mantuan court from the convent where many people came to hear her sing and play, as well as to secure a fine bass from Parma (Newcomb 1975, 98); however, there is no evidence that the group was ever successfully established. Vincenzo did have a female *concerto* perform at his second wedding in 1584 to Leonora de' Medici. But this time the singers stayed in Florence when the couple returned to Mantua. In 1587 Vincenzo was finally successful in establishing his own *concerto delle donne*. Almost immediately upon becoming Duke, he hired a group of women musicians for his *musica secreta*. Fenlon writes that "the formation of the ensemble was symptomatic of the fundamental alteration in attitudes that took place at the Mantuan court with the passing of Duke Guiglielmo. Conservatism, piety and moderation now gave way to a preoccupation with the latest fashions and the pursuit of pleasure"(Fenlon 1980, 145).

At the core of the group were Lucia and Isabella Pellizzari, two singers who were also particularly admired as players of the cornett and trombone. Their brother Antonio Pellizzari also accepted a position at Mantua; he was formerly the custodian of music at the theater of the Accademia Olimpica in Vicenza, where his sisters had also worked, first as child prodigies (they were employed by the academy since 1581), and later as regular performers and teachers (awarded a salary of 20 ducats each per year). In April of 1589 Duke Vincenzo travelled with his new female ensemble to show them off at Ferrara. Orazio dell Rena records the reception of the Mantuan *concerto delle donne* by Duke Alfonso and Duchess Margherita:

> For entertainment there were rich banquets and hours of exquisite music-making . . . I will tell you also that with the Duke of Mantua came four ladies from Vincenza who sing very well and who play the cornetto and other instruments. The Duke of Ferrara gave them a chain of 100 scudi and 100 scudi in cash to divide among themselves; the Duchess his wife gave to each one another chain of 50 scudi. (In Newcomb 1980, 99).

The Mantuan *concerto delle donne* also travelled to Florence in 1589, Duke Vincenzo having lent his female musicians to his brother-in-law for the wedding celebrations of Christine de Lorraine to Grand Duke Ferdinando of Tuscany. The *concerto* was a hit across Italy, but especially in Mantua, where a surge of publications from Mantuan composers in 1587-1591, including three books from Giaches Wert, an anthology of music by Mantuan composers, and Pallavicino's Book four à 5, attest to the musical influence of the new female singers.

Along with the Pellizari sisters, Vincenzo's *concerto* included Lucrezia Urbani and Caterina Romana; all four female singers are recorded on a list of singers paid from the Duke's privy purse in 1591. Urbani, a singer and harpist from Naples, is recorded in Mantuan documents as a court musician for the years 1603-05. It has been speculated that Caterina Romana may be Caterina Martinelli, nicknamed "La Romanina," the young flamboyant diva who was intended to play the title role of Monteverdi's *L'Arianna*, but died shortly before the premiere in 1608. However, surviving letters and documents concerning negotiations between Martinelli's father and Duke Vincenzo for her employment at the Mantuan court date from 1603-1604, so this makes her participation in the *concerto* of 1589 unlikely. What is certain is that by the end of the sixteenth century, the female singer had attained a new position of popularity and prestige among the courts of Italy. From their beginnings in Ferrara, to Florence, Rome and Mantua, the new 'girl groups' of the Italian *cinquecento* had established a firm role for female music-making which influenced and inspired composers and patrons alike.

The Changing Status of the Female Musician — A Problem of "Professionalism"

The formation of *concerte di donne* throughout northern Italy is indicative not only of the growing popularity of female singing, but of the changing status of the female musician within the aristocratic and upper bourgeois classes. In an article included in the collection *Women Making Music* (Bowers and Tick, 1987), Anthony Newcomb details the economic circumstances of the singers at the court of Ferrara and describes their social role as "professional" musicians, indicative of "a rapid and dramatic change" in the status of "the participation of women in professional music-making" (Newcomb 1987, 93). Newcomb defines the female *concerto*'s season of popularity as a period of miraculous transformation, suggesting that within the scope of twenty-five years, "a situation in which women were an obscure and unrecognized part of the profession became one in which they were at its apex," and argues that "by 1600 the change was virtually complete: a woman could actually aim for a career in music (or be aimed there by an ambitious relative) as an alternative to a career as an unpaid handmaiden of the Church or as the manager of her husband's household" (Newcomb 1987, 93).

Yet the conclusions Newcomb draws about women's entry into the sphere of "professional music-making" are somewhat one-sided. Although realizing that court custom dictates that women not be called 'professional' or be seen to use music-making as a means of subsistence, Newcomb nevertheless describes the members of the *concerto delle donne* as "early examples of the highly prestigious professional woman musician" (Newcomb 1987, 94). Unfortunately, Newcomb fails to account for the complexity of women's musical and social roles in early modern history, and he uses the word 'professional' without any acknowledgement of the modern associations of the word which cloud our understanding. Not only can women be said to have been active in so-called 'professional' music making since the early Middle Ages, but the very nature of music as a 'profession' in the Renaissance must be called into question for musicians of either gender, and is complicated by issues of class, race and economics.[8]

The word professional conjures up two elements: the employment status of the individual and the attitude toward and expertise of his or her music-making. For the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*, evidence of the latter element has caused observers to strengthen their impression of a 'professional' ensemble. Details of the ensemble's activities reveal that the singers' daily routine revolved around learning, practicing and performing music. They spent many hours practicing (Riley declares "from two to six hours daily" [1985, 481]), honing their vocal and instrumental skills, and learning new repertoire. The Ferrarese chronicler Girolamo Merenda (c.1540-1603) tells in 1596 how the three ladies and their teachers were specifically encouraged by the Duchess to practice every day:

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[8] Evidence of musical 'professionalism' prior to the sixteenth century include court and (to a lesser degree) church payrolls, and guild membership rolls, which include the names of women paid for musical services: Maria Coldwell observes that "the statutes of the guild of minstrels in Paris, dating from 1321, have eight women among the thirty-seven signers" (1987, 46), and Alison Sanders McFarland details the implications of musicians' names (both men and women) on the official pay records of the private papal treasury of the late-fifteenth century (1995, 4). For an earlier example, Hildegard of Bingen's 'profession' as nun, and later as abbess of her own convent, included music composition and performance as an expected and recognized achievement of her career.

> "Signora Anna Guarini who sang and played the lute, and Signora Laura [Peverara] the harp, and Signora Livia [d'Arco] still beginning to play the viola, and their teachers Signor Fiorino, maestro of the Lord's cappella, and Signor Luzzasco, the Duke's organist, and so Her Highness began to have them practice every day to sing together, such that to this day in Italy, and undoubtedly outside Italy, they are the best *concerto di donne* of any" (in Cavicchi 1965, 9).

The ladies of the *concerto delle donne* were coached by the court *maestri* Fiorini and Luzzaschi, and also given specific instruction from visiting experts. The respected bass and singing teacher Giulio Caccini details one such occasion where he not only sang for the Duke himself (for six days in a row), but gave some lessons to the ladies of the *concerto*: "since he [the Duke] enjoyed my manner of singing, today he begged me (this was the word he used) to favor him both by teaching his three ladies something with these *accenti* and *passaggi* of ours and by writing a few diminutions of a favorite bass of his. . . . Thus for some three hours I taught some *Arie* to these ladies in the presence of His Highness" (letter of October 11, 1592; in Newcomb 1980, 58).

Though all the singers of the Ferrarese *concerto* had been granted some music education in childhood as befitted a courtly lady, two of the women had more extensive training and had already established a reputation for musical and vocal excellence before coming to Ferrara. Laura Peverara was a well-known Mantuan singer and harpist, and Tarquinia Molza was much esteemed by fellow musicians and scholars for her learning, poetry and fine musical skill with the lute, voice, viola da mano, and harpsichord. Guarini and d'Arco thus may have received more specific instruction from Luzzaschi and Fiorini, as well as from their peers Peverara and Molza.[9] Riley asserts that Molza was in fact active in the role of director and vocal coach while she was involved in the Ferrarese

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[9] Newcomb suggests that d'Arco was undergoing musical tuition from her arrival at Ferrara in 1579 until her first recorded appearance with the *musica secreta* in 1581, in order to bring her up to the standard of Peverara and Guarini: "she was brought into the court because of the undeveloped beauty of her voice . . . and she was specially trained there to fulfill her designated function as a singer within the court" (Newcomb 1987, 100).

concerto from 1583-1589, and instrumental in the development of the ensemble. Riley clarifies Molza's position with the *concerto delle donne* by stating,

> after her arrival at court in 1583, Molza is never explicitly mentioned as a *performer* with that ensemble but as a respected singer and instrumentalist known to have played some significant role in that group. Her absence from the roster of singing ladies can now be reasonably explained by assuming that she organized and taught the trio of women musicians who caused such a stir, passing on to them a unique approach to the stylistic problems related to simultaneous improvisation. (Riley 1985, 481).[10]

The amount of rehearsal time expended, and the excellent tuition received from various instructors, led to significant accomplishment. The exceptional quality of the vocal concerts these ladies produced is reflected in the immense admiration engendered for the singing of the *concerto delle donne* of Ferrara.

As well as long hours spent in rehearsal, daily concerts were customary from the beginning of the ensemble's formation, as the Florentine Ambassador Orazio Urbani notes in a letter of June 26, 1581, "Cardinal Madruccio was entertained on the day of his arrival with the usual music of the ladies, which takes place every day without fail" (in Newcomb 1970, 46). These daily concerts often lasted a very long time, sometimes much longer than their guests' patience and enjoyment, as we have already seen from Urbani's account: "this party did not last one minute less than four hours, since, after some other ladies had sung, Signora Peverara (the Mantuan about whom I have written in the past) finally appeared and, under the pretext of having me hear first one thing and then another, [she sang] both by herself and together with other singers, with one and with several instruments, stretched the affair out as much as possible" (Urbani, letter of August 12, 1581; in Newcomb 1980, 25). Such lengthy musical evenings were standard fare at the Ferrarese court, as Merenda recalls in his chronicle of 1596:

> And each day in summer time, after dinner, the singing began at the nineteenth hour and continued until the twenty-first; the organist [Luzzaschi] with the harpsichord, Signor Fiorino with the *lauto grosso*,

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[10] Unfortunately the *concerto* lost this excellent teacher and *virtuosa* in 1589 when she was dismissed from the court upon the exposure of an amorous affair with the Mantuan composer Giaches Wert.

> Signora Livia with the viola, Signora Guarina with the lute, and Signora Laura with the harp, and the Duke and Duchess were always present . . . In winter time, they began at night and continue until after three o'clock. (In Cavicchi 1965, 9)

With three or more hours of singing per day, as well as long hours of rehearsal, it would seem that the ladies of the *concerto delle donne* would have had little time for any other duties or pursuits. The amount of time and energy expended in producing regular musical performances of outstanding quality is certainly indicative of what we would now term a professional attitude toward music. The dedication of these women to their music, and the support of both the Duchess and the Duke in encouraging them to practice long hours, continually learn new music and perform for the court in daily concerts, along with no mention of any other duties they might have undertaken, reveals a professional approach to their singing.

In the long hours of practice, polished work they produced, and admiring reception, the *balletto di dame* at the Ferrarese court also exhibits these aspects of 'professionalism,' yet Newcomb decides quite emphatically that these female dancers were merely amateurs. The members of the female balletto were committed to the Duchess's task, and often gave up more pleasurable tasks for long hours of rehearsal:

> The Duchess remained here [instead of going with the court to Belriguardo] to study and rehearse [consertare] that grand ballet, which she did yesterday during the hottest hours of the day with Donna Marfisa and seven other ladies. (Letter from Urbani, July 25, 1581; in Newcomb 1970, 67)

The performances of "highly worked-out" [ballo molto artificioso] dances were greatly admired by the court and visiting dignitaries, and may have influenced imitation groups in Florence and Paris (Urbani, 29 May 1581; in Newcomb 1970, 62). The elaborate *balletti* also involved professional composers, poets, and musicians of the court: in August 1581, Guarini sent several new madrigals to the Duke which he had written for Brancaccio, the *concerto delle donne* and the "ballatella" of the ladies which he requested to be set to music by Luzzaschi (in Newcomb 1970, 62). Yet Newcomb persists in saying of the *balletto di dame*, "its performers were not sought after specifically as dancers and hired virtually as professionals — they were not specialists, as were the singers of the *concerto delle donne*. The difference was probably roughly like that which might exist today between a fine amateur dramatic society and a good professional company" (Newcomb 1970, 69-70). Considering that at least two ladies-in-waiting to the Duchess, Laura Peverara and Anna Guarini, participated in both the *concerto delle donne* and the *balleto di dame*, the difference between the two groups may not be so concrete as Newcomb suggests.

While the long hours of rehearsal, highly polished daily concerts and admiring reception of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* reveal a 'professional' approach on behalf of the performers, patrons and audience, the employment status of the singing ladies of Ferrara does not. The position of the members of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* as "professional musicians" in regard to their employment status is clouded by two issues: firstly, they were singers of secular music, and secondly, and perhaps more important to the issue, they were women. According to Rob Wegman, "singing . . . was not a sharply defined trade" (Wegman 1996, 427). People from ordinary citizens to members of the ruling class to published composers all practiced singing, and many did so with no intention of obtaining remuneration. In addition, singing was not a profession protected by guild membership as was, for instance, playing the trumpet: "singing did not enjoy such protection, and this gave rise to a fiercely competitive labor market which in turn dispersed singers across a sliding scale of relative financial success, there being no sharp professional boundary line (or safety net) *de jure*" (Wegman 1996, 427). The best professional singers tended to be clerics who found positions in a court or cathedral *cappella*, and perhaps with knowledge of composition and theory and some skill in teaching could rise to the position of *maestro di cappella*. Because of the clerical status of its practitioners, Wegman notes, "singing could rarely develop into a family trade" and subsequently never followed the common Medieval development from family business to professional guild (Wegman 1996, 427).

In contrast to singers, composers often occupied positions which we can more aptly call professional. Heinrich Isaac, for instance, was the first professional composer in music history, followed closely by Jacob Obrecht, who was appointed *compositore de canto* at the court of Ercole d'Este in Ferrara in 1504. His title as indicated on the court payrolls, delineated his particular employment status or position as a servant within the Este court. "At the top end of the professional scale" was the title of *musicus* "which implied academic distinction," and at the other end were the numerous *cantore* listed in court and cathedral accounts (Wegman 1996, 437). Until the seventeenth century, secular singers rarely, if ever, were listed as such in court payrolls; they either functioned primarily in other musical roles (as in the case of Luzzaschi who was an *organista* or Fiorino, the *maestro di cappella*) or held court positions which allowed them to become intimate members of the *famiglia*, suitable to entertain in private gatherings of the *musica secreta*.

The noted bass of the Ferrarese *musica secreta*, Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, describes his position at court as "the trusted and very intimate servant of your serene family" (letter to Duke Alfonso of April 10, 1580; in Newcomb 1980, 13), a role he had held for forty years. When after a brief hiatus he returned to the Duke's service in October of 1580, he is listed as a courtier, even though his subsequent resentment makes clear that he was valued more for his singing than his experience as a courtier and military consultant. On one occasion recounted by Alessandro Lombardini in a letter to Cardinal Luigi d'Este, Brancaccio refused to take part in the *musica delle dame* for which the Duke had engaged him: "His Highness had had these things [some songs] given to [Brancaccio] in order that he might study them and know them well, but Signor Giulio Cesare in great anger said that he did not want to take part in them, that he was not employed by His Highness as a musician, and other not very appropriate words toward one's master" (letter of July 28, 1583; in Newcomb 1980, 26). Not long after this incident Brancaccio was dismissed from court and returned to Rome and Naples. Brancaccio's stormy career very clearly illustrates the dichotomy between his perception of his role at court and the negative social connotations associated with being perceived as a professional musician.

Two other courtier-musicians were involved with the *concerto delle donne* in Ferrara. Conte Alfonso Fontanelli came to Ferrara early in 1586; after serving in various Estensi households he became a gentleman of Duke Alfonso's court in March 1588 and remained there until the dissolution of the court in 1597. "One of the finest and most influential madrigal composers working at the Ferrarese court," Fontanelli composed graceful canzonetta-madrigals and pastoral settings typical of the luxuriant style of madrigal of the 1580s, contributing to the development of a new Ferrarese style of madrigal composition during the late 1580s and early 1590s (Newcomb 1980, 186). Another very active aristocratic musician, Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, arrived at the Ferrarese court in 1594 and together with Fontanelli and Luzzasco Luzzaschi make up the trio of composers whose eight books of madrigals were printed by the Ferrarese court printer Baldini in just two years (1594-1596). These three composers, Newcomb argues, were both influenced by the *concerto delle donne* and central to the new *seconda prattica*, "the last major stylistic movement in the history of the madrigal without continuo" (Newcomb 1980, 113). Both Fontanelli and Gesualdo were noblemen of independent means and relative wealth (Fontanelli's fortunes were augmented through his service to Duke Alfonso, while Prince Gesualdo was an equal of the Duke). Although their contributions to the development of secular Italian music are equal with that of the paid *organista* Luzzaschi, and indeed surpass Luzzaschi's reputation in modern music history, neither can, like Luzzaschi, be said to be a professional musician.

Because of their gender, the ladies of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* were not listed on the court payrolls as musicians, but rather were hired as *damigelle*, or *dame d'onore* —ladies-in-waiting to the Duchess— and were part of Margherita's personal household. As subjects of the Duke and Duchess, the ladies of Ferrara were servants, engaged in a *padrona-serva* relationship that was still, at the end of the sixteenth century, characterized by a feudal hegemony; yet because of their musical skill, these servants were highly favoured and awarded esteemed positions of intimacy within the ducal family. That their primary service to the Duchess was not concerned with her wardrobe, correspondence, or companionship, but with musical entertainment, offers deviation from the typical duties of a court lady only in respect to the amount of time they were expected to spend at their music and the amount of support offered in terms of musical supplies and tuition. In return, they were housed, fed, clothed, given an annual stipend as well as extra spending money, in some cases awarded houses or land, and married to suitable noble husbands with dowries provided by the Duke —the same generous rewards afforded to a valued and favoured courtier or court lady throughout feudal history. Their position at court, not as employees, but as members of the Ducal household or *famiglia*, was subtly different from that of the professional musician of the day, who would be listed as a musician on the court payroll according to their instrument or position in the *cappella*, and paid either annually, monthly or per service, but who could, with skill and cultivation, rise within the ducal household to a similar prominent position of favour.

Newcomb argues that all four ladies of the Ferrarese *concerto* were hired because of their skill as singers —"the documents surrounding the hiring of all four women make clear that they were brought in and paid richly by the court because of the beauty of their voices, and that they were expected to sing regularly upon demand" (1987, 93-94). While contemporary evidence substantiates this point for Peverara and Molza, the same is not true for d'Arco and Guarini. Newcomb cites ample evidence for these first two virtuosi: in each case Duke Alfonso had heard them outside of Ferrara and they already had reputations as fine musicians and gifted singers. Molza's friend and biographer Francesco Patrizi records that Molza performed for the Duke of Ferrara in 1568 when she sang, along with members of his *cappella* and by herself, for Alfonso and his second wife Barbara of Austria:

> On that occasion, His Highness wanted to hear her perform some difficult madrigals of Vincio in the company of the top musicians of his *cappella*. In that test, everyone else missed certain passages, while she held firm and sustained (her note) so as to give the others a chance to recover. And so the Duke, after reproving his musicians, praised her, saying that he had never heard anywhere a more secure part than hers. . . . But there is nothing to be heard in the whole world that is more sweet, wonderful and divine, than her singing to lute accompaniment. This singing amazed Duke Alfonso and Duchess Barbara. . . . Signora Tarquinia sang various things for them, but the Duke's very favorite was Petrarch's sonnet "Hor ch'il ciel," which—because of the wonder he found in it—he had her repeat four to six more times. (In Riley 1985, 486)

Riley notes that this event marks the first evidence of Alfonso II's interest in secular music: "it was precisely the experience of hearing Molza that sparked Alfonso's interest in female singing practice of a particular, highly innovative kind" (Riley 1985, 486). Living in Modena, Molza was nevertheless well known among musicians even in Ferrara for in 1570 her poems were set to music by Pietro Vinci (First Book à 5, 1571) and G. L. Primavera (Fourth Book à 5, 1573), and Luzzaschi set a madrigal in her praise, "Mentre fa con gli accenti / Tarquinia risonar l'aria d'intorno" in his First Book à 5 of 1571. Molza began singing with the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* in December 1582 (she is first mentioned by Trotti at this time) and joined the *famiglia della serenissima Duchessa* at a monthly stipend of 52 *lire* (which was likely augmented since Trotti claims she received 300 *scudi* annually plus rooms in the palace) in April 1583.[11]

The career of Laura Peverara, a native of Mincio, similarly begins outside of Ferrara, for she was known as an excellent singer and harpist in Mantua and Verona —a reputation circulated by some 75 poems written for her by Torquato Tasso between 1564 and 1567. By the time the Duke heard her in 1580, she already had a well established profile as a female musician, possibly performing regularly at the Accademia Filarmonica in Verona who later undertook to compile an anthology in her honour. Letters of the Florentine Ambassador Urbani and courtier Leonardo Conosciuti both confirm Duke Alfonso's insistence in acquiring La Peverara for his wife's household, and, by inference, for his own musical establishment.

> When His Excellency [Duke Alfonso] was at Mantua he saw a young lady who was rather beautiful and, in addition, had the virtue of singing and playing excellently. He thereupon conceived the desire to have her at Ferrara and, upon his return here, he had the Duchess send to obtain her as one of her ladies in waiting, which was done by special messenger. (Urbani, letter of March 1580; in Newcomb 1980, 11).

Since Peverara was quite a bit older than the young Margherita and still unmarried, and had no experience of service within a ruling family, she was an unlikely candidate for the position of *damigelle* to the new Duchess. Clearly Peverara's beauty, singing and playing earned her a position at the Ferrarese court.

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[11] Newcomb suggests that Tarquinia Molza came to the Court of Ferrara in December 1582 for a "trial appearance," to "audition" for the Duke, but this is unlikely since he had already heard and been highly impressed with her in 1568. Her visit in 1582 where she took part in "the usual music by the ladies, from 6:30 to 9:30" in the evening, when "the Duke's praise for her was such that one could not imagine higher" did however give the new Duchess, Margherita a chance to meet and hear this remarkable *virtuosa* and consider her for her household (Trotti; in Newcomb 1987, 96).

Although Newcomb attempts to make a similar case for the other two members of the *concerto delle donne,* Livia d'Arco and Anna Guarini, their positions were somewhat different. D'Arco, the first of the new sopranos to join the Ferrarese court, came from Mantua to Ferrara in February 1579 in the household of Margherita d'Este, in whose service she had been for some time. However there are no accounts of her singing until 1583. The daughter of a minor nobleman, Massimiliano Conte d'Arco, Livia (fl. 1579-1598) was a member of an old and noble Mantuan family, (although Newcomb suggests one in less than favourable financial circumstances). Still attributing a grand design to Duke Alfonso, Newcomb claims that Livia "was brought into the court because of the undeveloped beauty of her voice (the documents describing her recruitment make this clear), and she was specially trained there to fulfill her designated function as a singer within the court" (Newcomb 1987, 100). However, in this case there is no real evidence for Newcomb's statement—he cites no specific documents describing d'Arco's recruitment as he does for Peverara and Molza— and her arrival as part of Margherita's wedding party, along with the fact that she did not sing with the *concerto delle donne* until several years later, evinces that Livia d'Arco was simply one of Margherita's ladies whom she brought in her entourage from Mantua to Ferrara as was common for a high-ranking noblewoman to do. She is not recorded as singing with Laura Peverara until 1582, and only in Ferrara did she take up playing the viola and presumably also studied singing. Yet she did have talent, for by 1583 d'Arco was a regular member of the *concerto delle donne*.

Anna Guarini was similarly a member of the court before her admission into the *musica secreta*. The daughter of court secretary Giovanni Battista Guarini, Anna had grown up at the Ferrarese court, where presumably she had received her musical education, which included singing and playing the lute. She may have already sung on various occasions with her aunts, Isabella and Lucrezia Bendidio, perhaps even for the musical evenings organized by the Duchess of Urbino, but she was not singled out until later. Guarini is first mentioned as singing with Peverara on November 20, 1580, and she became a permanent member of Margherita's household in December of that year. Newcomb maintains that "a summary of the documentation surrounding the formation of this first concerto di donne at Ferrara can demonstrate more fully the points raised above: that the ladies owed their positions in court primarily to their gifts as musicians," yet Guarini undoubtedly owed her court position to her family status as much as her musical gifts.

One other major point which Newcomb repeatedly makes regarding the drastic difference in the early *concerto* of the 1570s and the new ensemble begun in 1581 is the social position of the singers resulting from their class background.

> The ladies of the first period were simply supplanted during 1580 and 1581 by another group of ladies whose backgrounds contrast clearly with those of the ladies of the first group. For example, only one of the four ladies in the second group (the "young girl d'Arco" mentioned in Grana's letter) was of even the minor nobility. Laura Peverara was the daughter of a wealthy merchant; Tarquinia Molza and Anna Guarini came from prominent artists' families. None of these ladies was of the same stock as the Bendidio, Scandiano, and Bentivoglio ladies, and none of them would normally have been a member of the inner circle of the court. (Newcomb 1980, 11)

By mentioning Peverara's merchant-class background and Guarini and Molza's artistic ties, Newcomb is attempting to drive as much social distance as possible between the older amateur court ensemble, whom he remarks "were ladies of noble birth with high positions in the Este domains" (Newcomb 1980, 10), and what he terms the new professional singers; yet the two groups were not so clearly divided. Livia d'Arco was the daughter of a minor Mantuan nobleman, Massimiliano, Conte d'Arco, whose family presumably had some ties with the ruling house of Gonzaga, for she was already in service to the young Gonzaga princess upon her move to Ferrara. Anna Guarini, as Newcomb observes, came from an artistic family, for she was the daughter of the renowned poet and Ferrarese court secretary Giovanni Battista Guarini. Yet her mother, Taddea Bendidio, came from an ancient and wealthy Ferrarese family, and her aunts (Isabella Bendidio

Bentivoglio and Lucrezia Bendidio Machiavelli) were ladies in the court of Lucretia d'Este, Duchess of Urbino; thus Anna had ample ties to the court as well as to aristocratic families to gain her a court appointment. That she was also a talented singer and lutenist offered one more recommendation for the position of lady-in-waiting to a Duchess who was enamoured of fine music and dancing. Tarquinia Molza also had artistic family connections for she was the niece of the poet Francesco Maria Molza, but her antecedents were far from common: her father, Cavalier Camillo Molza was a member of an important noble family in Modena. Although Molza had no direct connection to the Este or Gonzaga families that would distinguish Tarquinia for a life at court, and it is clear that her musical talent and amazing intellect rather than her family history attracted the Duke's attention, her breeding and upbringing (as well as the fact that she was a widow) amply suited her for the position of *dama d'onore* to the young Gonzaga princess.

Of the four women involved in the *concerto delle donne* of the 1580s, only Laura Peverara came from bourgeois lineage. The daughter of a wealthy Mantuan merchant, dilettante and harpist and his wife Margherita, the beautiful and highly gifted Laura Peverara made a name for herself in the social world of academies, court culture and music, and her reputation and talent alone gained her the socially ascendent position in the Duchess of Ferrara's household. The social background of the singers of the new *concerto* indicates not so much a professionalization of their musical abilities, but the complex world of Renaissance social hierarchy where money, beauty and talent counted as much as birth, and where the disintegration of a clearly defined demarcation between the lesser nobility and the bourgeois classes had been ongoing for centuries.

Of the earlier *concerto*, Lucrezia and Isabella Bendidio hailed from an ancient and wealthy Ferrarese family which had a long-standing relationship to the Este court; their sister Taddea married the poet Battista Guarini (1538-1612), who served at Ferrara and Mantua in the 1590s, entering the service of the Duke of Florence by 1602, and the two sisters were connected with various Estensi households throughout their lives. In September 1561 the fifteen-year-old Lucrezia (b. 1546) came to Padua in the train of Leonora d'Este, sister of Alfonso II; according to Einstein "she was for [that] whole year the object of the Petrarchan passion of Torquato Tasso, then a seventeen- or eighteen-year old student" (Einstein 1949, II:826), and she later acknowledged that she and Cardinal Luigi d'Este had been lovers that year. Knowing that, her marriage in 1562 to Count Baldissare Machiavelli may well have been one of expedience arranged by the Cardinal and his brother and sister-in-law, the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara. Lucrezia was at the Ferrarese court, in the household of Duchess Barbara of Austria by 1570 at which time she "became the object of the persistent attentions and poetic rhapsodies of G.B. Pigna, the Duke's first minister" (Einstein 1949 II:826). Isabella was also married to a high ranking nobleman of the Ferrarese court, Cornelio Bentivoglio, Marchese di Gualtieri, who commissioned the poem *Donna, se ben le chiome* from Tasso for her. According to Valdrighi, the Bendidio sisters were at Ferrara from 1571 to 1584, where they "served the duchess as chamber musicians and amazed everyone by their improvised singing of any motto or composition that was suggested to them" (in Einstein 1949, II:539-40). When Duchess Lucretia formed her rival *concerto* in 1589, the Avogadri sisters who formed the core of the ensemble were no more professional singers than the Bendidio ladies had been, rather they were high-ranking noble Ferrarese ladies who frequented the court of the Duchess.

Like the Bendidio sisters, Peverara, Guarini and d'Arco were accepted as ladies of the court, and they were presented and treated as such. Marriages with suitable noblemen were arranged for Anna Guarini, Livia d'Arco and Laura Peverara, just as they had been for Lucrezia and Isabella Bendidio, strengthening the women's position within the Este family and confirming their recognition as courtly ladies. The chronicler Girolamo Merenda remarks on the favoured treatment shown to the ladies of the *musica secreta*, stating that "Her Highness was able to marry all three of the ladies to principle gentlemen of the city. And she gave them rooms at court that were more convenient for their duties, and these three ladies continuously travel in the carriage of her Highness" (Merenda 1596; in Cavicchi 1965, 9). Peverara's marriage to Count Annibale Turca in February 1583 created a stir of gossip among the Italian courts, for not only was this an ambitious marriage for a Merchant's daughter, but the festivities celebrating the wedding were nearly on the scale of a royal union.[12] As the preparations for the Peverara wedding mounted, Urbani reports in a letter of February 7, 1583, of the equally escalating rumours:

> the rumor is afoot, and I have it on good authority, that the Duke gives her ten thousand scudi as dowry; provides for her, her husband and her mother-in-law, and gives her an apartment at the court that used to be that of Madama Leonora of happy memory.[13] (In Kenton 1966, 503-4)

In a letter of February 21, 1583, the Florentine ambassador continues his commentary on the Carnival season which he calls "a carnivalesque intrigue":

> There was another tournament yesterday, with the usual extravagances that make so much effect and cost so little, and tomorrow, for the conclusion of the festivities, there will be the wedding of the Lady Laura Peperara, with a tournament, the program of which I enclose, showing the ostentation and the honors done to this lady, and also the text of a grand ballet led and performed with 11 other ladies by the Duchess [Margherita], for the composition of which the Cavalier Guarino was recalled from Venice, where he went for the negotiation of some private business of his and for some financial matters. (In Kenton 1966, 503)

Urbani tells us that it was not uncommon for the Este princes to honor and assist their courtiers at the occasion of their wedding, but he maintains that "that which was done for 'la Peverara' is indeed extraordinary" (letter of February 21, 1583; in Kenton 1966, 503).

Although in many cases an artist's or scholar's talent and achievement allowed them to associate as equals with noble men and women in the context of cultural events, academies and court circles, the social transition did not always work so smoothly. While Peverara's beauty and talent earned her the love and respect of Count Turca, as well as universal approbation of their union, Tarquinia Molza's unfortunate love affair with the composer Giaches Wert is just one example of the inflexibility of the social structure of the time. When rumours exposed the affair to the court, the liaison was forcefully stopped, and Tarquinia was dismissed and sent to Rome. Carol MacClintock writes of the events,

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[12] Peverara's marriage to Count Annibale Turca in 1583 may be seen as a marriage above her former station, but was also a union for love as much as convenience. Letters from the courtier Giacomo Grana to his patron Luigi d'Este in Rome report a love affair between Turca and Peverara, and a subsequent courtship and engagement in April 1582, and describe Turca as "a man formerly unhappy in his love and . . . now luxuriating in a vigorous and fully reciprocated love . . . a state of affairs by no means common in court marriages" (in Newcomb 1975, 337).

[13] The apartments were those of Leonora d'Este, Duke Alfonso's unmarried sister, who had died in 1581.

> The Duke felt that such a relationship was unworthy of a gentlewoman of her quality and station. Rather than disgrace her publicly he allowed her to ask permission of the Duchess to leave her service on the pretext of being ill and unable to continue her duties. To impress on Tarquinia the unsuitability of this affair it was pointed out that even though Giaches was a court official and a favored courtier he was nevertheless a "povero fiammingo" whose wife had had a bad name and had died in prison. (MacClintock 1966, 45-46)

Although Tarquinia protested that it was a harmless friendship, corrupted by rumours circulated by a certain "Vittorio" out of professional jealousy, the damage had been done, and she was forced to leave the court. Many were sad to see her go, as a letter written by courtier Alfonso Fontanelli to a friend on 11 November 1589 attests: "Signora Tarquinia is leaving court, dismissed by His Highness, and Vittorio remains here in that same lord's service—so that, on all accounts, the Signora's case grieves me" (Durante and Martellotti 1979, 185). Molza's unfortunate liaison reinforces the perception that the female singers of the Ferrarese court were perceived and treated as court ladies, not as professional musicians.

It may be argued that the women of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* did in fact make their living with their voices, for their primary duty was singing, and for this they were housed, fed and rewarded materially and financially. But the fact that they were still perceived and treated as courtly ladies, distinct from the hired musicians of the court, belies the existence of a class of female professional musicians. What it does attest to is the transformation of traditional social groups and classes, with particular ramifications for musicians. Rob Wegman speaks of the court "domestication" of the composer and musician, and the newly developed "Renaissance idea of the artistic genius" which afforded the very best musicians a greater freedom in finding and choosing employment and a new status within court circles. The musician, along with the courtier, was still a servant of the Duke or Prince, yet with a greater social value placed on secular art music by elite members of the ruling classes, and an idealization of its practitioners, a musician now had a greater chance of rising to the intimate position of *famiglia* within the ruling household. The same idealization of the artist as genius allowed courtiers, noblewomen and even princes to compose or perform more elaborate music and in more public venues without damaging their social standing.[14]

Also contributing to the conflation of noble and professional classes were composers and musicians of noble families who published and worked alongside professional, working class musicians. Examples of nobles turned musician seem to be as common as musicians turned noble in the annals of the late sixteenth century. Gesualdo is the immediate archetype, but many others abound. One interesting example is seen in the life of Alessandro Striggio, a Mantuan nobleman now known predominantly as a composer. Although, as Einstein attests, Striggio "never accepted a professional post" nor sought the patronage of the ruling class ("not one of his works is provided with a letter of dedication") he served as courtier and composer both in the duchy of Mantua and the republic of Florence (in Einstein 1949, II:761). Striggio called himself "gentil'huomo mantovano" and "servitore dell' Illustrissimo et Eccellentiss. Cosimo de Medici Duca di Firenze e di Siena" (in Einstein 1949, II:761), and typically signed his letters in the style of the faithful courtier which was one of indebted servitude: "I kiss your most serene hands with all humility, praying Our Lord for your greatest glory and happiness"(letter to Grand Duke Francesco, November 9, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 56). But unlike the ladies of Ferrara who were treated as courtly ladies more than musicians, or the renowned bass Brancaccio, Striggio seems not to have minded being treated as a professional musician. He was an accomplished player of the lute and viols —in 1567 Cosimo Bartoli wrote that Striggio "is not merely excellent but even more than excellent in playing the 'viola' . . . he amazes the listeners"— and his compositions were highly prized. Striggio seems to have taken pride in his musical skill and enjoyed the recognition afforded him by lords and peers. "Here the Duke of Ferrara wants to hear my bass lyre every day and was rather pleased with Sandrino [Striggio's son]" he boasts, "and then he favored me by allowing me to hear for two hours without break his *concerto di donne*" (letter of July 29, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 55). The Grand Duke is similarly happy that his servant has been well received at his rival's court: "we are likewise pleased that you have returned so satisfied from Ferrara, and that Sandrino for his greater incentive has seen that virtue is prized and regarded by everyone" (letter of August 23, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 55). Striggio's position neatly illustrates that there could be little difference between a favoured courtier and a favoured musician, whatever the family and class status.

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[14] On the idealization of musicians, especially of composers, Edward Lowinsky notes that "the distinction between genius and craftsman emerges with full clarity in the thought of the classical scholar and musical theorist Giovanni Battista Doni (1594-1647)" who speaks of the "genius of the good composers" and distinguishes between those composers (such as Peri) who hardly depart from the conventional rules" and others such as Gesualdo who "was truly born for music, and with a gift for musical expression, and who could clothe with his musical gifts any poetic subject, [but who] never attended, as far as one knows, to canons and similar labored excercises" (Lowinsky 1964, 338, 340).

Though women could be highly prized at court for their singing abilities, throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries they only rarely appeared on court pay records as musicians, and then usually as itinerant singers, such as the Anna *cantatrice* recommended by the Marquis Guglielmo di Monferrato to the court of Milan in 1468. In the early sixteenth century, singer and recorder player Paula Poccino (who may have been the wife or sister of lutenist Paulo Poccino) was employed as a musician both at Mantua and subsequently at Ferrara, yet Giovanna Moreschi, wife of Marchetto Cara was well known and admired as a singer, but not awarded her own salary. Even among those who have been recorded as being paid for their singing it is difficult to find a common denominator that would distinguish them as professional singers. Howard Mayer Brown wisely hesitates to distinguish a particular class of professional women musicians both because of "the difficulties of defining precisely the term *professional musician* and because there seem to have been not one but several classes of women who were paid for their musical activity" (Brown 1987, 67). Women of diverse classes —lower-class minstrels or members of travelling theatrical troupes, women from modest families hired by courts specifically for their musical talent, gifted townspeople called in to help celebrate a notable event, daughters and wives of court or chapel musicians, women of the lesser nobility who served as *dame d'onore* at great courts because they sang well, and even female members of the ruling class such Isabella d'Este or Margherita Gonzaga whose lute songs and elaborate *balletti* earned much admiration— all regularly took part in entertainments at Italian courts, and many were materially or financially rewarded for their performances.

One of the first and most interesting female singers to be employed at court on a more permanent basis was Madonna Dalida Puti whose name appears on Lucrezia Borgia's household pay records for 1507 as "Madonna Dalida de cantore comenzò a dì primo de settembre per tuto dito ano" (in Prizer 1985, 8 fn.).[15] Dalida Puti recieved 96 lire per year —"Madonna Dalida di Puti per havere servito tutto lo anno presente in ragione de L. 8 dato il mese—L. 96"— the same salary as other musicians except Tromboncino, who received an annual salary of 465 lire. Unfortunately, we cannot know if Dalida was considered a lady in the court household of Lucrezia Borgia, or merely a musician in her employ; perhaps the difference in how she was received and treated compared, for instance, to the Lady Graziosa Pia who also sang, was only one of subtle perception. Though the designation *de cantore* in the pay records reflects her primary duties, it does not necessarily lessen her status as a lady in Lucrezia's court; many other ladies-in-waiting to princesses and duchesses are recorded simply by their first name and a descriptive nickname, such as Nicola da Siena, an admired dancer and close companion of Lucrezia Borgia, or Isabella Ballerina, a lady in the permanent household of the Mantuan Duchess Margherita in the 1550s.

We do know that Madonna Dalida performed regularly, both in private chamber music settings, and, what was rarer for a court lady, in costumed *intermedi* and at banquets in company with professional male musicians. In 1508 she performed, dressed as a shepherd, along with Tromboncino and two other singers in an eclogue by Ercole Pio presented by Ippolito d'Este, which compared the virtues of Lucrezia Borgia, Isabella d'Este and Elisabetta Gonzaga. In 1512 Dalida's name appears on the pay records of the Ferrarese household of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este who took on many of Lucrezia's servants

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[15] Lucrezia's pay records are housed in the *Libri d'amministrazioni dei singoli principi* in the *Archivio di Stato di Modena*; this quote is taken from libro 1131, fol. 86v.

(including Bartolomeo Tromboncino) when she was forced to downsize her staff during 1511-1512, due to tighter financial circumstances resulting from the Borgia-led wars of that period. This alone indicates her servant-musician status, for a *dame d'honore*, an attendant who served only a female mistress, could obviously not be transferred to a male ruler, unless on behalf of his wife or other female relative. Instead, Dalida de' Putti was known to be the mistress of Cardinal Ippolito, as well as his musician. In this de' Putti conformed to a popular stereotype that classified all performing women as morally suspect. As Tim Carter says, female virtuosos

> occupied a difficult position within the patriarchal societies of their time. These singers were expected to cultivate the graces and talents of the well-rounded courtier—and could often be regarded and rewarded as such—but they remained servants at the whim of their employer. As women, too, their role as 'courtiers' could easily shift to that of the courtesan—their sex was fair game in the male power-play that made up the politics of prestige—and in both professional and private terms, they were subject to the men (patrons, husbands, sons) that dominated their space and controlled their lives. (Carter 1999, 452)

"By participating in rhetorical or musical performance," writes Nina Treadwell, "even the supposedly pure donna di palazzo or lady-in-waiting was implicitly signaling her sexual desirability" (Treadwell 1997, 58). When female singers and ladies-in-waiting such as Lucrezia Bendidio, Angela Borgia, or Dalida de' Putti openly engaged in extra-marital affairs, the implication of sexual availability attached to all court women was strengthened. For de' Putti, however, Ippolito's patronage and friendship aided her career. After his death in 1520, she appears to have stayed on in Ferrara, for she was still performing at the Ferrarese court in 1529, when she sang in a *concerto* containing some of Duchess Reneé's (wife of the next Duke of Ferrara, Ercole II) musicians at a lavish banquet on Sunday January 24, under the direction of Alfonso della Viola.

The next mention of women listed specifically as singers or musicians at the northern courts does not occur until late in the sixteenth century. As we have seen, the singing ladies of Ferrara were employed and treated as courtly ladies-in-waiting in the service of the Duchess, but as the craze for women's chamber vocal ensembles grew, the distinction between court lady and professional musician was becoming blurred. A concern for the respectability of female singers in the Florentine court demonstrates a lingering perception that these women were still treated as court ladies, not as independent professionals. In the late 1580s Vittoria Archilei and Laura Bovia had both served as ladies-in-waiting to the Florentine Grand Duchess Bianca Cappella, but, when the new Grand Duke Ferdinand prepared to bring his bride to Florence, he was concerned that the unmarried Bovia would not prove an appropriate *damigelle* for the French princess Christine de Lorraine, and informed her that she must either marry, return home or enter a convent. Earlier in her career, an invitation for Laura Bovia to come to the Gonzaga court as a "suitable companion" to Duke Guglielmo's new daughter-in-law Margherita Farnese was suspended because of rumours casting suspicions on Laura's relations with too many musicians. Before he would continue negotiations, the Mantuan Duke required reliable reports of her good conduct from the canons of San Giovanni in Monte who oversaw the convent of San Lorenzo where Laura, the niece (a title which was often a euphemism for an illegitimate daughter) of the highly placed Bolognese church official Monsignore Giacomo Bovia, had been raised.

Bovia's invitation to Mantua and position in the Florentine Grand Duchess's suite were unexceptional for the daughter of a well-connected minor noble house; in both she is still offered a post as a lady-in-waiting, rather than as an employed musician. But to an outside observer, it was Bovia's voice which caught attention, and she was known not simply as a lady, but as a singer. The dedication of Bamillo Cortellini's First Book of Madrigals à 5 (1582) illustrates Bovia's juxtaposed position (and that of many late sixteenth-century female singers) as a highly admired musician who has risen in society to the position of court lady:

> It is no wonder that you are vastly admired and coveted by many important Princesses both near and far, who offer to maintain you with such prizes and honors as are usually offered to the most tenderly loved leading ladies of the court. How many people, for this reason, have sent to Bologna both gentlemen and virtuosi to listen to you and to obtain this superhuman joy? How many musicians, lured by the widespread reputation of your great quality, have come from various places to hear you? (In Newcomb 1980, 99)

Cortellini makes a distinction between Bovia, the prized singer who is "admired and coveted" as an elusive object to be obtained, and the near-courtly status she has attained, being treated like one of "the most tenderly loved leading ladies of the court," just as he makes a distinction between the "gentlemen" and "virtuosi" who come to hear her.

The line between amateur lady singer and professional female musician was more obfuscated when female members of musical families, highly valued for the beauty of their singing, were accepted, despite their lack of noble birth, as attendants in the ruling ladies' households in the elite courts of Italy. In the early sixteenth century, the division was already beginning to blur. Female musicians such as Giovanna Moreschi, wife of Marchetto Cara who regularly performed with her husband, were rarely listed as *musica* or *cantore* on court rolls or afforded a separate salary, but might be given gifts or awarded monetary compensation by their patrons. In a letter of December 3, 1501 Giovanna wrote to ask Duke Francesco Gonzaga for 15 ducats on behalf of her family, because she had been ill for many months, identifying herself as Donna Zahana [Johanna], wife of Marchetto *cantore* (in Prizer 1980, 15). Marchetto had acquired such favour in the court of Francesco and Isabella that a few years after Giovanna's death in 1509, Isabella arranged a new marriage for him, this time with one of her own *damigelle* of the court.

Another female singer from a musical family, Virginia Vagnoli, became the wife of Alessandro Striggio in 1572. But before her marriage, she engaged in what might be described as a musical career. Hailed as "Virginia who sang and played most wonderfully" by Antonio Molino, Vagnoli was active as a performer in Venetian *ridotti* in the 1550s. From 1566 to 1570 she served at the court of Urbino along with her father, who was also a musician. Although hired to sing and play instruments in a *musica secreta* of the inner court, as an unmarried woman, however, Virginia was afforded none of the freedoms or privileges afforded other (male) professional musicians. She received no separate salary, but was supported by her father who was paid, on behalf of them both, 200 *scudi* per year plus title to property worth another 200 *scudi*. Offers of employment were negotiated and declined or accepted on her behalf by her father, and again her service at court was tied to her marital status: in 1570 an offer to serve as a singer in the Imperial Court in Vienna stipulated that Virginia must come as the wife of the young cornettist Luigi Zenobi who at that time was in the service of Emperor Maximilian II. Judging by her marriage to Alessandro Striggio in 1572, the offer was declined. Vagnoli's marriage to Alessandro Striggio, a nobleman, marks a change in her social and professional status, for there are no records of further musical involvement after her marriage, which is somewhat peculiar considering Striggio's close ties with both the Florentine and Mantuan *concerti di donne*. Rather, Vagnoli appears to have retired from singing, and settled in Mantua where she lived with her three children Francesca, Giovanni and Alessandro, even while her husband was in the service of Grand Duke Francesco of Florence.

The best example of female singers in a musical family is found in the lives of the Caccini family. Similar to the situation of Virginia Vagnoli, the musical careers of Giulio Caccini's wives and daughters were managed by their husband and father, and were tied to his position at court, as well as to their marital status. Caccini's first wife, Lucia, who was a singer and member of the first Florentine *concerto delle donne*, actually received her own salary under Grand Duke Francesco, as is evidenced in the previously quoted letter detailing her loss of salary during the cuts made by the new Grand Duke, Ferdinando: "the Grand Duke has dismissed several servants of his dead brother, has kept many others on whole salary, and has kept others still on half-salary. . . . Although His Highness has left Giulio Romano his salary, he has taken away that of his wife" (letter of January 2, 1588; in Newcomb 1980, 91). Despite the loss of an independent salary, in August of that same year Lucia Caccini was still performing, along with "several ladies who sing quite well" (letter of the Ferrarese ambassador at Florence, August 13, 1588; in Newcomb 1980, 92). The status of an unmarried woman was directly tied to that of her father or guardian, and a married woman to that of her husband. In many respects these women were considered the property of their male relative, and the property of a male servant was in turn 'owned' by his Lord or Prince. Hence, a man could claim a salary for the services of his entire household, especially the work of his wife and any unmarried daughters, as Giulio Caccini did.

As daughters of a servant of the Florentine court, Francesca and Settimia Caccini were subjects of the Grand Duke —caught in the complicated *padrona-serva* relationship that characterized their father's role at court— and their musical careers were governed not only by their father but also by the Duke and Duchess of Florence. In 1608, the seventeen-year-old singer and composer Settimia Caccini received offers of a position at the courts of both Vincenzo Gonzaga in Mantua (the offer included a dowry and finding a suitable husband) and Enzo Bentivoglio in Rome, but both offers were declined when the Medicis refused to release her from Florentine protection. In 1609 Settimia married the singer and composer Alessandro Ghiviazzani, becoming a salaried musician of the Medici court along with her husband. The Grand Duke and Duchess were no doubt pleased to provide a dowry of 600 *scudi* in return for securing the services of their court composer's daughter, for as Tim Carter notes, "for a patron, the best way of guaranteeing a woman's status and continued service was to have her married to another employee" (1999, 452). Settimia and Ghiviazzani's careers were thereafter linked: after a few years in the Medici service, they left Florence in 1611 for Lucca, joined Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga's musical establishment in Mantua in 1613 and in 1622 settled in Parma in the service of Cardinal Farnese.

Settimia's sister Francesca offers the nearest picture of a professional female musician in Renaissance Italy that one can find; yet her career is still characterized by the control of her male relatives as well as the need to be seen as a respectable lady of the court. Trained in singing, composition, harpsichord, lute and "chitarineta" at her father's school in the Medici court, Francesca made her debut as a singer at age 13 in the 1600 premiere of the first opera, *Euridice*, by Jacopo Peri. In the winter of 1604-5 Francesca sang as part of the Caccini family on tour for the King and Queen in France, and received her first independent job offer from Marie de' Medici as a salaried singer at the French court. In keeping with the rising standards for women *virtuose*, the offer included a dowry of an amazing 1000 *scudi*, but again, Grand Duke Ferdinand of Florence refused to release her from his service, even though at this time she was recognized only as *figlia* of his servant Giulio Romana. Negotiations between her father and Prince Peretti for a position with Princess Margherita della Somaglia-Peretti (sister-in-law of Cardinal Montalto an

Virginio Orsini in Rome) included offers of a salary and dowry but were broken off in 1607 when Francesca married Florentine court singer Giovanni Battista Signorini Malaspina and officially entered the service of the Florentine court. The Medici Grand Duke matched the 1000 *scudi* dowry offered by the Perettis, enabling Caccini and Malaspina to buy two adjoining houses in the via Valfonda near S. Maria Novella, where they lived until his death in 1626.

Although now a recognized and highly valued court musician, Caccini's career was still distinguished by her gender, for she was hired as a member of the grand duchesses' female court. Caccini was listed as a *musica* among the ladies-in-waiting on Medici payroll records, a fact which distinguished her both as a working musician and as a lady of the court. Caccini had her own residence outside the palace and her duties included singing not only in intimate *musica secreta* gatherings, but at religious office during Holy Week, at receptions given by the Grand Duchess, and in more public theatrical entertainments. As well as singing, Caccini also quickly became renowned as a singer and teacher, and she instructed princesses, ladies-in-waiting, and at least one nun in singing and directed her pupils in a *concerto delle donne* described as "la sig[nor]a Francesca e le sue figliuole" who performed music for women's voices until the late 1620s. Caccini's great talent and drive resulted in distinguished recognition among her peers and patrons —by 1623 she had become the most highly paid singer at court, earning 240 *scudi* per year, which constituted more than any other court employee save the Duke's secretary— and a social ascendancy which allowed her to make a favourable second marriage to a Lucchese nobleman Tomaso Raffaelli, director of the Accademia degli Oscuri. Yet Caccini's successful musical career as well as her identity was still dominated by her father and husbands. During her marriage to Signorini, Francesca herself used her married name, but was often still referred to as "la figliuola di Giulio Romano" in Medici court records. During her three years as the wife of a wealthy landowner, Francesca left the Medici payroll, but in 1633 she returns to the payroll records of the grand duchess's court as a respected widow.

The distinction between a singer hired as a court musician and a court lady serving as chamber singer seems to take into account not only class and background —those from a professional musical family more readily acquiring a position as *cantatrice* while the lesser nobility sang under the guise of court ladies— but could also dictate the type of music performed and the venue. The Ladies of Ferrara who were still treated as courtly *dame d'onore,* although famed throughout Italy, nevertheless only sang in the intimate *musica secreta* of the Ferrarese court. Their music and their performances were kept strictly in the realm of private, domestic music. While avidly shown off by their chief patron Duke Alfonso II d'Este, he allowed them to perform only for the most noble gentlemen or intimates of the court, and it was considered a great honour to be allowed to hear the three ladies sing: on February 20, 1581, Orazio Urbani records the visit of an English gentleman named Tomaso Rondelli "whom the Duke honored greatly, particularly in admitting him to the *musica secreta*" (in Newcomb 1970, 44). The Florentine ambassador himself had to wait almost two years from first hearing about the gifted Laura Peverara's angelic voice before finally being admitted to an evening of chamber music presented by the ladies on August 12, 1581.

The Duke guarded not only the select performances but also the music written for his *concerto delle donne*. Several visitors report being shown a manuscript book containing the *concerto*'s repertoire, including all the ornamentation written out—

> His Highness had put in the hands of His Excellency a book with all the things that the ladies were singing, whence they were greatly praised by that Prince and by the other gentlemen" . . . songs which "all three [ladies] sang very nicely, alone, in duets, in trios altogether; they sang Echo dialogues, and many other beautiful and delicious madrigals. (Letter of July 23, 1583, from Alessandro Lombardini to Luigi d'Este about the visit of the Duc de Joyeuse; in Newcomb 1980, 26)

> The Duke favored me continually by showing me written out all the pieces that they sing by memory, with the diminutions [*tirate e passaggi*] that they do. (Letter of July 29, 1584 from Alessandro Striggia to his patron, Francesco de' Medici at Florence; in Newcomb 1980, 55).

Yet while the Duke was pleased to show off his singers and their music, he would not allow their repertoire to be published or circulated. When composer Alessandro Striggio visited the Ferrarese court on behalf of his patron Grand Duke Francesco of Florence, he kept secret the fact that he was composing pieces in imitation of the ones he heard the ladies sing: "I wanted no one to see it," he writes of a madrigal he is sending to the Grand Duke, "[so] I am sending it to Your Serene Highness without having tried it out" (letter of July 29, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 55). Einstein observes that the "Duke was jealous, especially of Florence, and thus the repertory was kept secret; of the compositions written expressly for the three *cantatrici* little or nothing became available until Luzzaschi's publication of 1601" (Einstein 1949, II:829).

The Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* was clearly kept in the world of the private court *famiglia*, for their performances were mostly held in the private chambers of the Duchesses; thus their performances maintained the respectability suitable to a lady's 'proper' place in the domestic sphere. Yet their position was not without ambiguity. Treadwell notes that although "the intimate performance setting began as a reponse to the unusual social position of these women . . . [and] no doubt acted as a buffer to the prevalent assumption that unmarried musical women were sexually promiscuous, that is, courtesans or highly placed prostitutes," yet "the private, indeed secretive nature of the group's performances" held an element of eroticism (Treadwell 1997, 57-58). "The women were, in effect, guarded against common observation, yet, through seclusion, subject to the unrestricted gaze of the duke himself. . . . If one considers the sexual ambiguity surrounding women's self-display, the erotic appeal of secluded viewing is closely aligned with scopophilic desire" (Treadwell 1997, 58).

By the time Vincenzo Gonzaga attempted to establish his own *concerto delle donne* at Mantua, the respectability of the court lady had been thrown over in favour of the value of beautiful voices. The Mantuan *concerto* exhibited the most "professional" characteristics of all the female ensembles of the late *cinquecento*. Duke Vincenzo's obsession with the formation of an innovative female *concerto* on the Ferrarese model was well known, and his negotiation to obtain these "ladies who sing quite well" was seen as a musical venture, even though it was cloaked under the respectable guise of providing court ladies for his new duchess. In the correspondence of the Ferrarese ambassador to Mantua, however, the ladies were simply ranked along with the regular musicians whom "his Highness continues to hire" (letter of 1588; in Newcomb 1980, 92). At least two of the women he hired —Lucia and Isabella Pellizari— came from artistic families, had already established musical careers, and played the very unfeminine instruments of cornetto and trombone. Although little is known of the other two, Lucretia Urbana and Caterina Romana, it is fairly certain that neither were of noble background and that both had been extensively trained in singing.

By the time Vincenzo's *concerto delle donne* was well established, the pretense of the lady-in-waiting had been dropped, for the four women "Signora Lucia Pellizari, Signora Isabetta Pellizari, Signora Lucretia Urbana, Signora Caterina Romana" are listed together with Giaches Wert and Claudio Monteverdi as musicians on the court payroll of 1591. The performances of these women were also less couched in courtly mystique. Although ostensibly a *musica secreta* of the court, the performances of the four Mantuan *virtuosi* were not as carefully guarded as those of the Ferrarese *concerto* had been: they performed not only Mantua but 'toured' to Ferrara and Florence, and they performed in staged, costumed productions for more public festive entertainment (at least in events open to all visiting nobles). Both the Mantuan and Florentine *concerti* performed in public entertainments such as *intermedi* to staged dramatic productions, and the Caccini sisters were the stars of the very first operas. The performances of the Mantuan *concerto*, compared with its Ferrarese model, appear to take women's performance out of the guarded, private, domestic space and into a more public sphere of upper class entertainment.

The merging of the world of the female singer with the theatre and their increasing fame pushed these women into the dangerous realm of public space, and thus opened them up to increasing moral censure. In the public sphere, women were open to public attack, and those attacks were launched, not against their professional skills, but against their virtue. The humanist writer Isotta Nogarola, for instance, was subject to the most vicious and abusive attacks by her male peers. Yet she was not assailed for the quality, subject matter or style of her writing, but, rather, she was accused of immodesty, vanity, promiscuity, sexual deviancy and incest. The male misogynists who degraded Nogarola's work and reputation, aligned her with an impressive list of classical and contemporary

Italian women who display the same general decadence and erosion of morals which Isotta was accused of. It was this emergence of women into the world of public performance that caused Artusi to discredit modern music as unnatural and feminine.

When women consciously put themselves on display they faced "widely held identification as sexually dangerous and morally suspect courtesans, along with the stereotypes of women's intellectual and artistic inferiority" (Nicholson 1999, 252-253). Thus the distinction between court lady and professional woman singer was a necessary one; only as a respectable lady could a woman of the Renaissance escape the moral censure that was tied to all things professional and public. Yet "no matter how much the partly or even fully professional singer might try to distance herself from women who sold their sexual favors, she thus risked censure and scandal for her potentially disruptive impact on ordered patriarchal society" (Nicholson 1999, 251).

The sexual ambiguity which surrounded both a lady's and a female singer's role at court is illustrated in many examples: Dalida Puti's long-term affair with Cardinal Ippolito d'Este and her status as 'musician' rather than 'lady' at Lucrezia Borgia's court; Lucrezia Bendidio's early promiscuity and hasty marriage to Count Baldissare Machiavelli; Virginia Vagnoli's retirement from her singing career upon marriage to the aristocratic composer Alessandro Striggio; Laura Bovia's dismissal from the Florentine court and Tarquinia Molza's from Ferrara; the virginity test required before Caterina Martinelli would be accepted at the Mantuan court; the marriages of the members of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*; and the offers of employment linked with offers of marriage which were extended to the Caccini sisters. The conscious awareness of a tangible slight on a woman's virtue due solely to her performance in public venues is most avidly illustrated by Francesca Caccini's refusal to let her own daughter follow in her footsteps. In January 1637, Caccini refused to let her daughter Margherita sing on stage in a *commedia* at the grand duke's command, "arguing that such an appearance could compromise the 15-yr-old's chances of an honourable convent placement or marriage contract, would tarnish the social position of her son and break the terms of [her late husband] Raffaelli's will" (Cusick, 1994b, 97).

From these biographical sketches a complex portrait of the female singer appears: one which was permanently coloured by class status and family background, despite the heights of fame and fortune which could eventually be achieved, or the socially ascendent marriages made; one which was polished with the respectable veneer of the court lady although a woman musician might never be fully accepted as such; one which is still guided and guarded by the male patriarchal establishment around her; and one in which public female singing, whether by aristocratic lady or merchant's daughter, contained a hue of immodesty akin to sexual immorality, which could quickly taint an otherwise virtuous reputation. Yet by the end of the sixteenth century, the female singer had emerged from the domestic realm of private court entertainment into the more public spaces of theatre and academy, and she had become one of the most admired and well-paid artists of her day. If not fully professional, as we might understand the word today, the *virtuosa* singer had established herself as a recognized and revered figure throughout Italy.

Chapter Eight

The Music of the *Concerti di donne*: Gender, Genre, and Musical Style

Feminist musicologist Marcia Citron attests that "gender is expressed in music and its codes" and that music can reflect "societal ideologies of gender and its effect on the experiences of real women" (Citron 1993b, 122). In the music written for and performed by the female singers of the late sixteenth century, there can be found a distinctive interconnection between Renaissance perceptions of gender and the development of musical style. The *concerto delle donne* at Ferrara and similar ensembles across Italy performed various styles and genres of music —*villanelle*, *balletti*, *canzonette*, madrigals, *arie*— within various configurations of the chamber ensemble —as solo song, accompanied duets and trios, and within mixed-gender ensembles. The music they performed is linked to conventions which determined and proscribed the female performer, and the popularity of their performances had a direct impact on the development of secular music composition. Scholars of the late sixteenth-century Italian madrigal agree that the *concerti di donne* of Ferrara, Florence, Mantua and Rome had immense influence on the composition of secular vocal music, and, in particular, the stylistic development of the madrigal. The ideologies of gender that coloured the reception of these admired female singers also coloured the music that was written for them and the aesthetics and stylistic nuances of their performance.

The vast number of madrigals and other vocal works written for female-dominant ensembles or dedicated to female *virtuosi* and their patrons, in itself attests to the extensive fame and lasting influence of the *concerti di donne* of Ferrara, Mantua and Florence. Publications dedicated to the Ferrarese *concerto* as well as Duke Alfonso and Duchess Margherita began to appear in the 1580s, from composers now entrenched in the musical canon such as Luca Marenzio, Giaches Wert, Carlo Gesualdo, Alessandro Striggio, Philippe de Monte and Luzzasco Luzzaschi, with over forty lesser-known composers also dedicating works to members of the *concerto delle donne* or their patrons.[1] Anthony Newcomb summarizes the situation of music composition surrounding the Ferrarese court in the 1570s and 1580s:

> Large numbers of madrigal prints were indeed bought during the first years of the existence of the *concerto delle donne*. Not only the financial power represented by this extensive buying but also the rapidly growing prestige of the *musica secreta* at Ferrara would tend to make madrigal composers of the 1580s turn toward the Este court as a promising source of patronage. The number of madrigal books dedicated to members of the court during these years indicates that many composers did so. (Newcomb 1980, 68)

At least three anthologies were compiled in honour of the Veronese *virtuosa* Laura Peverara alone —*Il lauro secco*, 1582; *Il lauro verde* 1583 and the untitled MS 220 Verona, *De diversi a mano à 5 et 6. Madrigali*— and numerous individual poems and their musical settings pay homage to the amazing vocal prowess of the other three members of the Ferrarese concerto, Anna Guarini, Livia d'Arco and Tarquinia Molza.[2]

Many composers also wrote for the Mantuan *concerto*: publications or individual works by Wert, Gastoldi, Rossi, Baccusi, Pallavicino, Trofeo, Monteverdi, and Striggio all bear dedications to Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga and his female *musica secreta*. As Iain Fenlon writes, "composers with court connections seem to have found this new climate [at Mantua] stimulating; between 1588 and 1591, Gastoldi and Wert each published three books of secular music, and during the same period Pallavicino, Rossi, Baccusi and Trofeo produced volumes of madrigals and *canzonette*" (Fenlon 1980, 145). The profuse compositional activity surrounding the major female *concerti* at Ferrara, Mantua, Florence and Rome can be attributed as much to the liberal patronage which sustained the groups as to the talent of the women themselves. Yet it was through praising the female singers of Dukes like Alfonso II d'Este, Vincenzo Gonzaga and Ferdinando de' Medici, and writing music that highlighted their soprano voices, that composers like Striggio, Marenzio and Monteverdi could gain the social and financial support of potential patrons. Indeed, as ambassador Orazio Urbani commented in a letter to the Florentine Grand Duke of 26 June 1581, "one can give no greater pleasure to the Duke [of Ferrara] than by appreciating and praising his ladies, who are constantly studying new inventions" (in Newcomb 1980, 97). It is with this in mind that Filippo di Monte, for instance, dedicates his fourteenth madrigal book from Vienna and Prague (1590) to Duke Alfonso, acknowledging the Duke's great love of female singing:

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[1] See Newcomb 1980, Appendix IV, for a list of madrigal prints from 1559-1600 that are either dedicated to members of the Ferrarese court, composed while working in or close to the court, or printed in Ferrara.

[2] For example: Agostini's Third Book of Madrigals à 6 (1582) contains one madrigal dedicated to Anna Guarini, two to Laura Peverara, and two to their director and accompanist Luzzaschi; the Neapolitan composer Stefano Felis published a setting for five high voices of a madrigal written in Tarquinia Molza's honour by Torquato Tasso, "Forsi è cagion l'Aurora" (1591); and in Virchi's Book I à 5 (1584), dedicated to Duke Alfonso, the composer sets a madrigal which puns on the names of all four ladies:

SeGU' A RINAscer LAURA e prende L'ARCO
Amor soave e dolce
Ch'ogni cor duro MOLCE

("Let the Laurel continue to be reborn, and let sweet and gentle Cupid, who softens every hard heart, take his bow"; in Newcomb 1980 2:153)

> Among your other great virtues, Fame celebrates your zeal for Music, and just as this art resounds with marvelous harmony in your royal bearing, so do you often desire to hear it, divided among angelic voices and sung by such rare spirits that he who listens believes himself to have a sure foretaste of the life of the blessed. (In Einstein 1949 II:829)

The madrigal book contains settings of poems by the popular Torquato Tasso and is characterized by pieces which highlight two or three high voices, obviously intended for use by the Ferrarese concerto.

The body of works inspired by, written for and dedicated to these famous female singers and their patrons reveals an escalating appreciation of the extremely talented, virtuosic vocalists of the late sixteenth century. In the compositional development of the madrigal from the 1570s to 1600, certain trends such as use of a lighter canzonetta-madrigal hybrid, favouring the high female voice, a flourishing of ornamentation, the luxuriant style of the 1580s, and the intertwining of polyphony and solo song all reflect an increased awareness and acceptance of female singing styles due to the popularity of the various *concerti di donne* and *virtuosa* soloists throughout Italy. These developments also betray certain societal ideologies of gender which informed the experiences of these performing women and permeated the music which they both performed and inspired.

Female Voices, Lighter Genres and the Hybrid Canzonetta-madrigal

The female Ferrarese court performers of the 1570s still performed genres which were associated with courtly entertainment and in particular with female performance. The noble Bendidio and Scandiano ladies, educated for the position of female courtiers, made use of the lighter Italian genres typically associated with courtly entertainment and performed predominantly as lute songs or solos with harpsichord accompaniment —that is, they conformed to the performance of genres considered acceptable for female chamber performance. A letter of Giulio Brancaccio gives us a glimpse of the musical practice of the ladies of Ferrara before 1580, as he reminds Duke Alfonso of his previous service: "in the service of the ladies of your court, I had put together some not unpleasant *arie di sonetti* and *canzone villanesche* that would not have been found displeasing" (letter of July 9, 1580; in Newcomb 1980, 14).

The aria had been a successful vehicle for the display of female accomplishment, both musical and poetic, since the early part of the century, and the *villanella* had recently become popular as courtly entertainment. In his 1628 *Discorso sopra la musica de' suoi tempi*, Vincenzo Giustiniani observes that the *villanella* became popular as courtly entertainment around the year 1575 (Giustiniani 1962, 69). Newcomb agrees that "the lighter forms—usually strophic songs called villotte, villanesche, villanelle, balletti, canzonette, etc. were among the preferred types of music for solo-singing around 1570" (Newcomb 1980, 18), and MacClintock attests that "the villanella was becoming very popular at both courts [Ferrara and Mantua]" around the 1570s (MacClintock 1966, 105). MacClintock argues that an "early example of the villanella style" found in Wert's compositions of 1577 may "possibly be one of the compositions he wrote after having received information [through a letter of July 16, 1576, from the ducal secretary San Giorgio] about the new style of music being performed in Ferrara" (MacClintock 1966, 105). It would appear, then, that in the early stages of the first *concerto delle donne* of

Ferrara, although directed by the madrigalist Luzzaschi, the ladies of the court still performed musical genres whose historical association with women and female court performers extended as far back as the early *cinquecento*, when Isabella d'Este wrote strambotti to perform to lute accompaniment and Gaspara Stampa performed her own *sonetti* to formulaic *arie*.

During the 1570s the more serious madrigal began to appropriate characteristics of the *canzoni*, *villanesche* and other lighter genres so popular in courtly entertainment and female singing. Dance-like rhythms, frequent repetition, clear cadence points, transparent, vertically-oriented textures with 2 or 3 voices moving in parallel thirds or 6ths, strophic forms, and pastoral themes all began to appear in five- and six- voice polyphony, mixed with the conventional contrapuntal texture and expressive word-painting of the madrigal. This hybrid canzonetta-madrigal was exemplified in the works of Andrea Gabrieli, Giovanni Ferretti and Luca Marenzio, among others. "The greatest master of this style," Gabrieli submitted a pastoral canzonetta-madrigal for inclusion in *Il Lauro secco*, the anthology dedicated to Laura Peverara (Newcomb 1980, 74). His use of text complements the playful nature of the *canzonetta* style, for Gabrieli turned predominantly to "poems that step outside the world of the 'literary' Petrarchism of the first two-thirds of the century into either the playful and conventional world of the pastoral lyric, or the sensuous and often vulgar world of the semi-popular canzone" (Newcomb 2001, 554). Marenzio's early works similarly display an affinity with the *canzonetta*. His hybrid madrigals avoid over-complicated contrapuntal textures and adopt a "bell'aria" and "grazia" which contribute to a characteristic pleasing melodic style (Chater 1981, 7). Chater remarks that Marenzio's "lightness of touch, clear harmonies . . . [and] graceful opening counterpoint" combined to form a "combination of erudition and sheer musical delight" which "caught the imagination" of all those who heard, performed and copied his music (Chater 1981, 7).

Along with the textural and lyrical elements that characterized the new hybrid style, an increased use of high tessituras began to transform the madrigal. The five- or six-part madrigal which previously might have contained two baritone and two tenor parts, with one alto and one soprano, now typically appeared with at least three women's parts, *especially two or more soprano lines*, with only two accompanying lines for male voices. Again, Gabrieli and Marenzio are at the forefront of this stylistic innovation. Einstein writes, "Marenzio and A. Gabrieli are the founders of the pastoral style that was characterized by . . . the lighter rhythm of the *canzonetta* and especially by the bright, transparent sound of high voices and the high register, and by the vocal *scherzando*" (Einstein 1949, II:626).

The increased use of high registers which accompanied the new hybrid canzonetta-madrigal undoubtedly reflects the growing popularity of female singers at Rome, Florence and Venice —musical centres frequented by both Gabrieli and Marenzio— which preceded the development of female ensembles at Ferrara and Mantua. In mid-century Venice, a tradition of fine female singing had been firmly established by the soprano Polissena Pecorina and her peers, Franceschina Bellamano, and Polissena Frigera. Pecorina, Bellamano, and Frigera are all listed in Ortensio Landi's *Sette libri de cathaloghi* (1552) as the three most noted female musicians of the modern era. In the 1570s, Eufemia Joloza awed admiring Neapolitan audiences with her spectacular singing, while the Venetian tradition was carried on by lauded singer and composer Madalena Casulana, as well as by La Pecorina's daughters Caterinella and Lucia, and their successors.[3] There were ample female singers in Italy to encourage the use of high tessituras in the 1570s.

Around this time in Rome, where Marenzio chiefly lived and worked, a young Vittoria Archilei and Lucia Caccini may have begun to draw attention to themselves as budding virtuosi, while Tarquinia Molza and Laura Peverara had already established far-reaching reputations out of Modena and Verona. Cardinal d'Este was involved with Lucrezia Bendidio and Leonora Sanvitale before they moved to the Ferrarese court, and Marenzio may have heard them sing before the first Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* became a regular performing ensemble. The continuous tradition of female singing, and its growing acceptance especially within the Italian courts, presented composers such as Marenzio and Gabrieli with ready consumers for the type of light, secular compositions they produced.

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[3] In 1571 Marenzio's patron, Cardinal Luigi d'Este, undertook a legal matter on behalf of "certain sisters, heirs of a certain Polisena Pecorina" which involved the royalties of a music manuscript by Willaert formerly owned by La Pecorina and now in the possession of the Cardinal's brother Duke Alfonso (letter of October 29, 1571; in Newcomb 1973, 134).

Function and Style from Academy to Court— A Cappella to Accompanied Song

Marenzio's use of elements from the lighter non-madrigal genres and his emphasis on high tessituras coincides with the madrigal's emergence from the academy into the court, where courtiers and ladies began to sing madrigals along with the solo lute songs they had practiced for decades. Giustiniani observed that in 1570 the old style of madrigal singing was still "practiced in Rome by gentlemen" who would "sing together with several voices" but the new style, begun in Rome by Giulio Caccini, was "sung by the ladies," who would "sing with one or at most three voices in concert with suitable instruments as the theorbo or chitarra, or the cembalo or with the organ" (Giustiniani 1962, 77). The lightening of the serious madrigal both reflects the changing ideology surrounding the social function of the madrigal and facilitates its acceptance into the artificial world of courtly pastimes.

Historically, gender in music genres has been characterized by certain traits seen as masculine or feminine: "maleness [is associated] with the large, the non-functional, and the intellectual, which are valued; femaleness with the small, and the functional (and the private) which are devalued" (Citron 1993b, 123). The appropriation of the madrigal from its predominantly male academic surroundings and its function as an intellectual pursuit undertaken in *ridotti* among learned humanists and literary dilettantes, to the feminine court of the Duchesses of Urbino and Ferrara where it was performed in intimate chambers by women for the pleasurable relaxation of the ducal *famiglia,* also transferred existing ideological associations of gender and music to the Italian madrigal. Instead of male intellectual pursuit, the madrigal becomes a vehicle for the display of female talent and beauty, and instead of a combined participatory act it becomes an object to view, hear and admire. As a result, the madrigal began to take on characteristics of the lighter genres already associated with female singing, including the transformation of *a cappella* polyphony to accompanied song.

From the years 1570-71, four books of popular lute songs remain extant, compiled in Venice, Florence and Rome, and all contain mainly *villanelle* and *napolitane.*[4] By the end of that decade, however, both Vincenzo Galilei and Cosimo Bottegari were copying the best madrigals of Lassus, Palestrina, Striggio, Rore, Wert and others in the lute books they used for entertainment at the Medici courts in Rome and Florence. In Venice books of lighter genres, such as Gasparo Fiorino's *Libro secondo, Canzonelle a tre e a quattro voci . . . inlode & gloria d'alcune signore & gentildonne genovesi* (Venezia, figliuoli di Antonio Gardano, 1574), were vying with arrangements of popular madrigals. The best madrigals of Cipriano de Rore were published in a flexible score format for use with multiple combinations of voices and any accompanying ("perfect") instruments in Venice in 1577 (Cipriano de Rore, *Tutti i Madrigali di Cipriano di Rore a quattro voci, spartiti et accommodati per sonar d'ogni sorte d'instrumento perfetto, et per qualunque atudioso di contrapunti*, Venice: Angelo Gardano). By the early 1580s, an edition of madrigals, *canzonette*, and *villanelle napolitane* compiled by Gabriel Fallamero, "*gentilhuomo allessandrino*," combined the most popular songs of both styles, including intabulations of four madrigals by Luca Marenzio (*Il primo libro de intavolatura da liuta de motetti ricercate madrigale, et canzonette alla napolitana, a tre, et quattro voci, per cantare, et sonare*. . . . Venice, crede di G. Scotto, 1584).

The solo lute song so popular in private courtly entertainment, or *musica secreta*, through the mid-sixteenth century was gradually merging with the more academic madrigal in performance context and compositional style, at the same time that the madrigal was adopting many of the sylistic characteristics of the lute song repertoire in its new hybrid format. Not only did this facilitate courtly performance by amateurs, but women, who had already adopted the performance of lute songs as an acceptable female accomplishment, began also to sing madrigals. Although, as the eyewitness report of Canigiani who, on August 14, 1571, heard Isabella and Lucrezia Bendidio sing together to the harpsichord accompaniment of Luzzasco Luzzaschi, suggests, these madrigals were mainly performed as accompanied solo songs.[5]

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[4] Cornelio Antonelli, *Il primo libro delle napolitane ariose* . . . (Venice, 1570); Giacomo de Gorzanis, *Il primo libro di napolitane* . . . (Venice, 1570); Gasparo Fiorino, *La nobilità di Roma . . . villanelle à tre voci . . . intavolate dal magnifico M. Francesco di Parise, musico eccellentissimo in Roma* (Venice, 1571; rpt. 1573); and *Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS. Magl. XIX, 109,* (undated, c.1570-80), which contains sixteen *villanelle* and one madrigal.

When the polyphonic madrigal began to be appropriated for the female ensemble, it was performed more often as solo or ensemble music (duets and trios) with instrumental accompaniment than as purely vocal pieces. The ladies did sing together with men, so that an *a cappella* rendition of a conventional madrigal was possible. But the *concerto delle donne*'s renown lay in the delicate interplay of high female voices, and the novel combinations for one, two or three sopranos singing *concertate* with instrumental accompaniment. In 1579 at least five ladies —"Marchesa [Isabella Bendidio] Bentivoglio, Signora [Lucrezia Bendidio] Machiavella, Signora Vittoria [Bentivoglio], the sister of the Count of Tiene, and Marcia married to Signor Anguellino"— performed music which had been prepared and rehearsed under the direction of *maestro di camera* Luzzasco Luzzaschi. The concert took the form of a combined solo recital, which Conosciuti describes, saying, first "each one [sang] separately and then all together" (Conosciuti, letter of February 4, 1579; in Newcomb 1970, 10). At a later concert of the second period concerto involving Laura Peverara, Anna Guarini and Livia d'Arco, the madrigal is specifically mentioned: the eyewitness notes that the ladies "sang Echo dialogues and many other beautiful and delicious madrigals" but observes that these were again performed "alone, in duets [and] in trios altogether" while "Luzzaschi was with the harpsichord" (Lombardini, letter of July 23, 1583; in Newcomb 1980, 26). This early example of accompanied pseudo-monody predates the printed continuo madrigal by at least twenty years, revealing that current performance practice is not always reflected in publishing conventions.

It was this aspect of female ensemble singing, whether with *villanella*, *canzonetta*, aria, or madrigal, that made the performance of the Ferrarese ladies so new and exciting. Evaluating Striggio's letters regarding his appreciation of the Ferrarese *musica secreta*, Newcomb states:

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[5] Interestingly, Luzzaschi wrote no light music whatsoever, while Wert wrote *villanelle* (his book of 1589), and Palestrina wrote three-voice *canzonette* into the late 1580s and early 1590s.

> One can imagine what in this situation so impressed Striggio. It was not unusual to encounter in a court charming ladies with lovely voices who had learned some music — perhaps even some rather spectacular music— for performance by heart. It was distinctly unusual to find that such ladies had benefitted by considerable musical training, and that they used their training and skill for the performance in concert of printed polyphonic music. That three or four ladies, each of whom combined a highly trained voice and a lovely manner with sure musicianship, should be in a position to devote a great deal of time to the singing of madrigals in concert— this must have been an entirely new situation. (Newcomb 1970, 128-129)

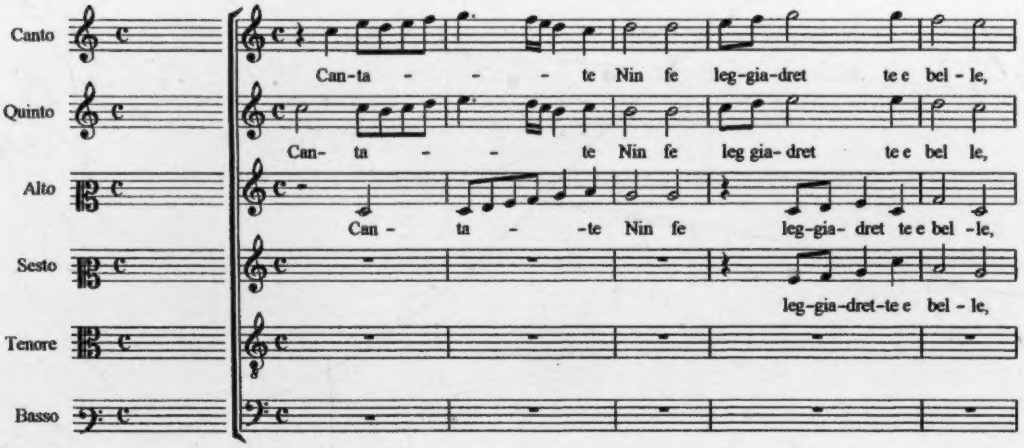
Contemporary music historian Vincenzo Giustiniani also notes that alternating ensemble and solo singing emerged both in performance and compositional practice around 1570: "the compositions of Luca Marenzio and Ruggiero Giovanelli appeared with delightful new inventions, either that of singing with several voices or with one voice alone accompanied by some instrument" precisely around the time that "those Dukes [of Mantua and Ferrara] . . . took the greatest delight in the art, especially in having many noble ladies and gentlemen learn to sing and play superbly, so that they spent entire days in some rooms designed especially for this purpose and beautifully decorated with paintings" (Giustiniani 1962, 69). The works of Marenzio and Giovanelli along with many other composers of the time were no doubt used by the famous ensembles of female singers which emerged at the end of the *cinquecento*.

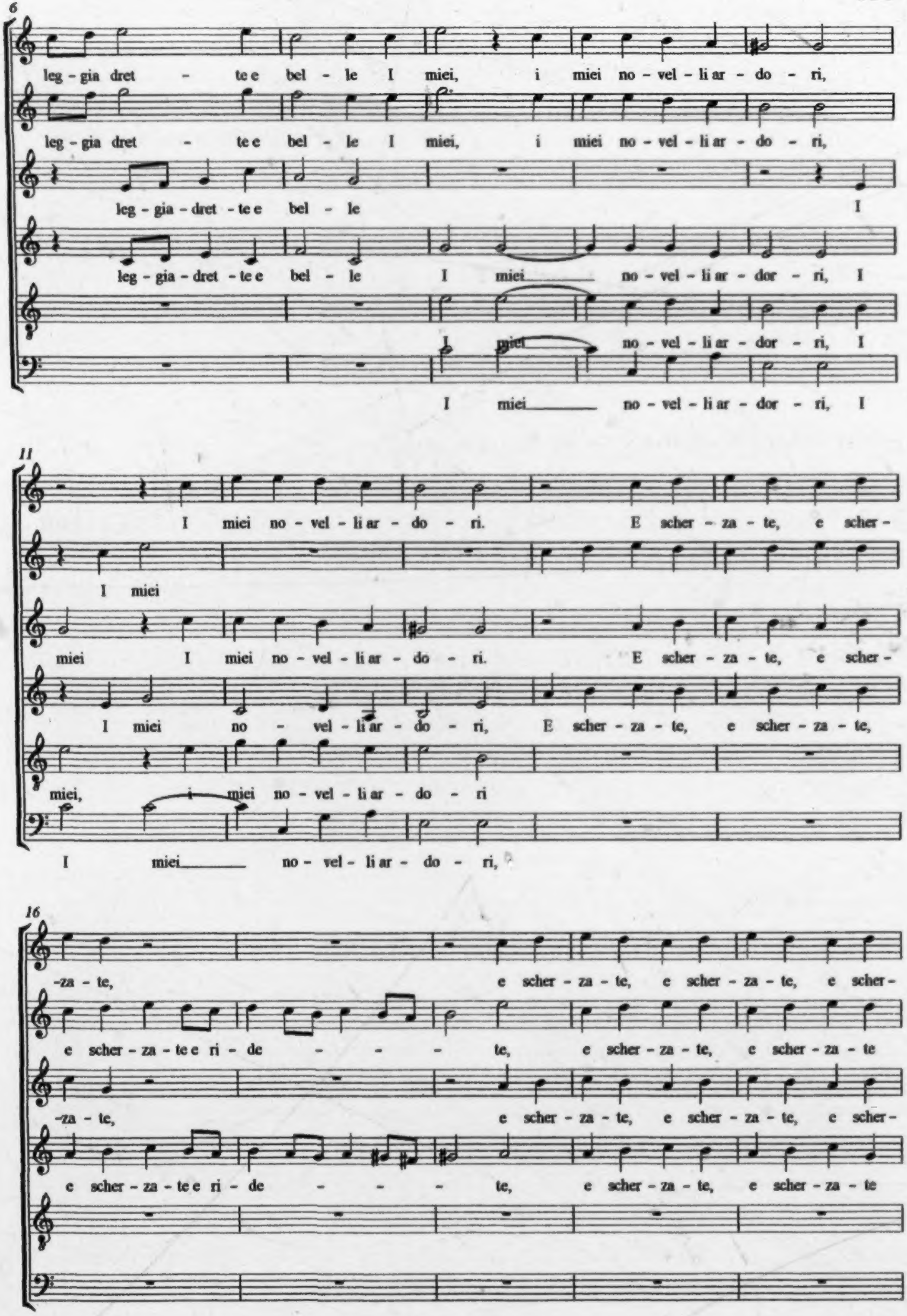
The Luxuriant Madrigal: Stile Concertato, Diminution, and Gender Ideology

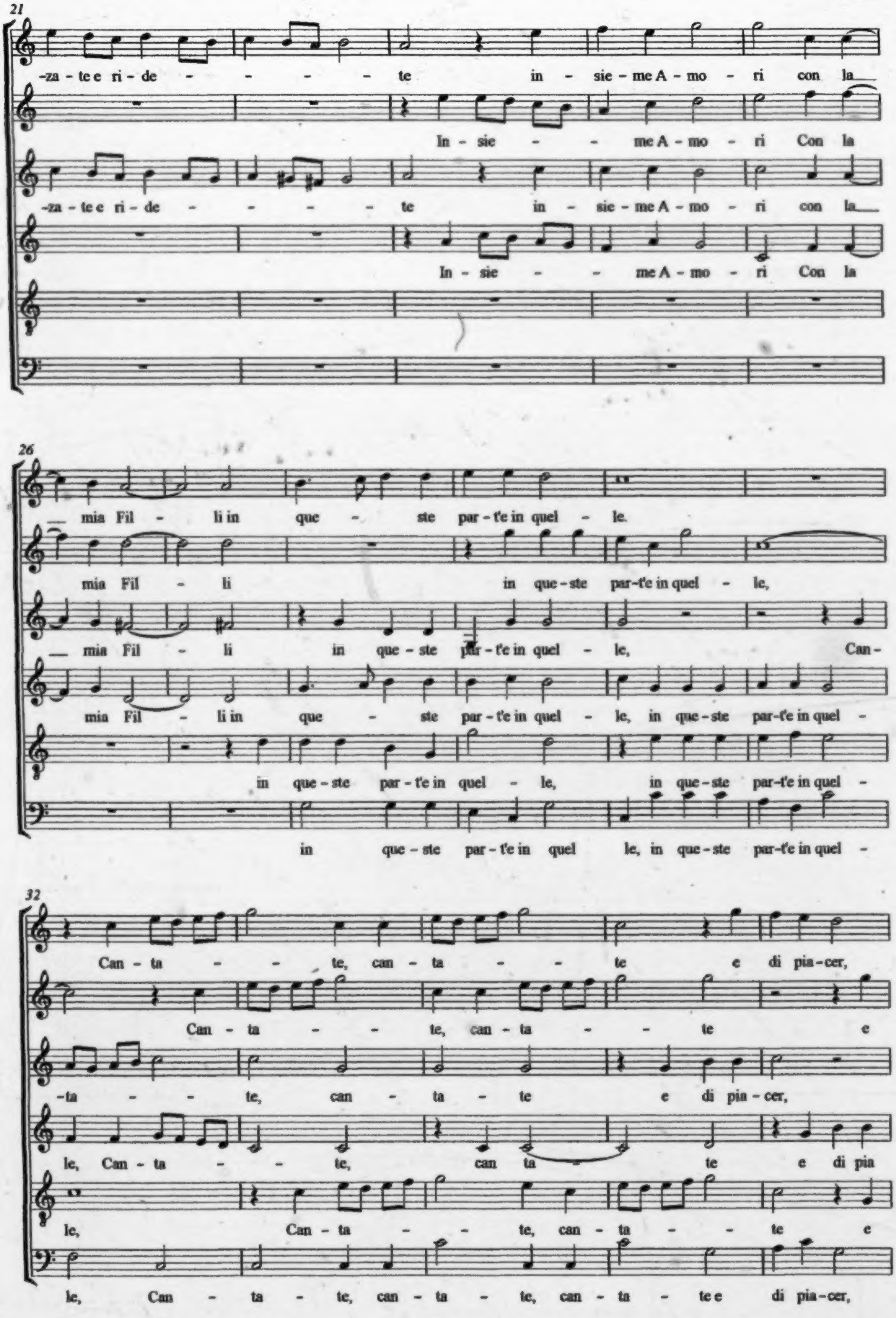
As he had been in the 1570s, Luca Marenzio was an innovator of the next major stylistic alteration of the madrigal—the ornamental style. This development was directly linked with the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*. James Chater declares that "Marenzio is perhaps the first important composer to form his style with the sound of these Ferrarese voices still fresh in his ears" (Chater 1981, 4). Marenzio visited the court of Ferrara during the winter of 1580-81 with his employer Cardinal Luigi d'Este (the brother of Duke Alfonso) just as the excitement and enthusiasm for this new and innovative group was peaking. Shortly after his visit to that city, Marenzio dedicated his *First Book of Madrigals à 6* (April 1581) to the Duke of Ferrara, and his *Secondo libro a cinque voci* (October 1581) to the Duke's sister, Lucrezia d'Este, Duchess of Urbino. Typical of music written for Ferrara's virtuosic vocalists, Marenzio's two publications of 1581 show the characteristic development of what was to become known as the ornamental or "luxuriant" Ferrarese style. In addition to incorporating elements of the lighter *canzonette* and *villanelle*, madrigal composition began to shift from an equal-voice contrapuntal texture to a form which juxtaposed sections showcasing two or three higher voices against solid full-voice part writing. This contrasting texture highlighted the virtuosic female singers of the court concertos and emphasized individual soloists rather than the cohesive ensemble singing of earlier four-part writing; it also placed great emphasis on extravagant vocal diminution, both improvised and written out.

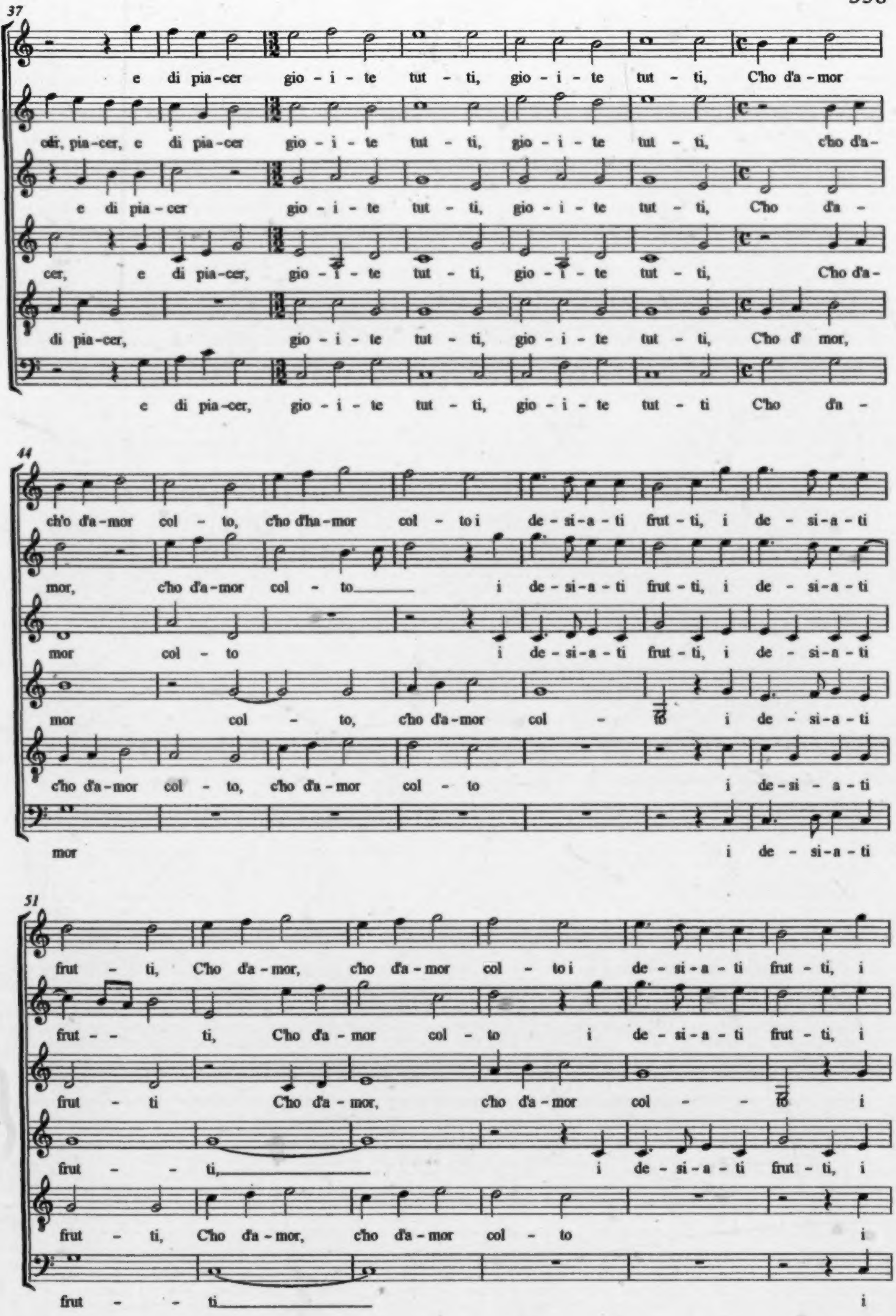
Cantate Ninfe, one of Marenzio's most famous songs from his *Il primo libro de madrigali à sei voci* (1581) actually highlights four female voices —two high sopranos and two mezzos— who open the piece in a fanfare of bright sonorities.

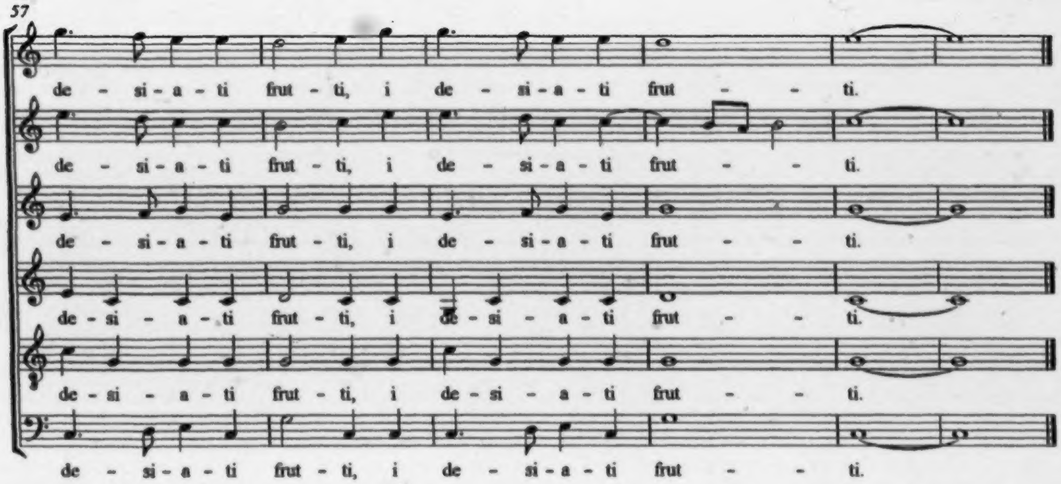
Example 6. *Cantate Ninfe* by Luca Marenzio


Canto
Can-ta - - - te Nin fe leg-gia-dret te e bel - le,
Quinto
Can- ta - - te Nin fe leg gia- dret te e bel le,
Alto
Can - ta - -te Nin fe leg-gia- dret te e bel -le,
Sesto
leg-gia-dret-te e bel - le,
Tenore
Basso


6
leg - gia dret - te e bel - le I miei, i miei no - vel - li ar - do - ri,
leg - gia dret - te e bel - le I miei, i miei no - vel - li ar - do - ri,
leg - gia - dret - te e bel - le I
leg - gia - dret - te e bel - le I miei no - vel - li ar - dor - ri, I
I miei no - vel - li ar - dor - ri, I
I miei no - vel - li ar - dor - ri, I
11
I miei no - vel - li ar - do - ri. E scher - za - te, e scher -
I miei
miei I miei no - vel - li ar - do - ri. E scher - za - te, e scher -
I miei no - vel - li ar - do - ri, E scher - za - te, e scher - za - te,
miei, i miei no - vel - li ar - do - ri
I miei no - vel - li ar - do - ri,
16
-za - te, e scher - za - te, e scher - za - te, e scher -
e scher - za - te e ri - de - - - te, e scher - za - te, e scher - za - te
-za - te, e scher - za - te, e scher - za - te, e scher -
e scher - za - te e ri - de - - - te, e scher - za - te, e scher - za - te


21
-za - te e ri - de - - - - - te in - sie - me A - mo - ri con la
In - sie - - me A - mo - ri Con la
-za - te e ri - de - - - - - te in - sie - me A - mo - ri con la
In - sie - - me A - mo - ri Con la
26
mia Fil - li in que - ste par - t'e in quel - le.
mia Fil - li in que - ste par - t'e in quel - le,
mia Fil - li in que - ste par - t'e in quel - le, Can-
mia Fil - li in que - ste par - t'e in quel - le, in que - ste par - t'e in quel -
in que - ste par - t'e in quel - le, in que - ste par - t'e in quel -
in que - ste par - t'e in quel le, in que - ste par - t'e in quel -
32
Can - ta - - - te, can - ta - - - te e di pia - cer,
Can - ta - - - te, can - ta - - - te e
-ta - - - te, can - ta - te e di pia - cer,
le, Can - ta - - - te, can ta - te e di pia
le, Can - ta - - - te, can - ta - - - te e
le, Can - ta - te, can - ta - te, can - ta - te e di pia - cer,


37
e di pia-cer gio-i-te tut-ti, gio-i-te tut-ti, C'ho d'a-mor
cer, pia-cer, e di pia-cer gio-i-te tut-ti, gio-i-te tut-ti, c'ho d'a-
e di pia-cer gio-i-te tut-ti, gio-i-te tut-ti, C'ho d'a-
cer, e di pia-cer, gio-i-te tut-ti, gio-i-te tut-ti, C'ho d'a-
di pia-cer, gio-i-te tut-ti, gio-i-te tut-ti, C'ho d' mor,
e di pia-cer, gio-i-te tut-ti, gio-i-te tut-ti C'ho d'a-
44
ch'o d'a-mor col-to, c'ho d'ha-mor col-to i de-si-a-ti frut-ti, i de-si-a-ti
mor, c'ho d'a-mor col-to i de-si-a-ti frut-ti, i de-si-a-ti
mor col-to i de-si-a-ti frut-ti, i de-si-a-ti
mor col-to, c'ho d'a-mor col-to i de-si-a-ti
c'ho d'a-mor col-to, c'ho d'a-mor col-to i de-si-a-ti
mor i de-si-a-ti
51
frut-ti, C'ho d'a-mor, c'ho d'a-mor col-to i de-si-a-ti frut-ti, i
frut-ti, C'ho d'a-mor col-to i de-si-a-ti frut-ti, i
frut-ti C'ho d'a-mor, c'ho d'a-mor col-to i
frut-ti, i de-si-a-ti frut-ti, i
frut-ti, C'ho d'a-mor, c'ho d'a-mor col-to i
frut-ti i


57
de - si - a - ti frut - ti, i de - si - a - ti frut - - ti.
de - si - a - ti frut - ti, i de - si - a - ti frut - - ti.
de - si - a - ti frut - ti, i de - si - a - ti frut - - ti.
de - si - a - ti frut - ti, i de - si - a - ti frut - - ti.
de - si - a - ti frut - ti, i de - si - a - ti frut - - ti.
de - si - a - ti frut - ti, i de - si - a - ti frut - - ti.

The work, written in hypoionian mode (its final on c) which Orazio Vecchi would later describe as "atto al triomfo" ("apt for triumph"), ideally suits the anonymous text with its joyful announcement of triumph in love. Throughout the work, the four female voices are featured in unaccompanied sections juxtaposed against tutti passages where the upper parts are supported by the tenor and bass lines, especially where the text, with such exhortations as "gioite tutti," compels Marenzio to invoke a full sound, accompanied by homophonic treatment and a dance-like triple metre. Word painting abounds, rhythmic *passagi* fulfill an expressive function —especially ascending runs used to represent joy and hope— but do not contravene the inflection of the poetry, while subtle chromaticism colours diatonic passages and stabilizes modal modulations. Throughout, Marenzio retains the playful nature of his lighter canzonetta-madrigals, and embraces the high soprano tessituras for which the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* was famed.

The new luxuriant style was "not abruptly called into existence by the formation of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne* in 1580 . . . [rather] the formation of a stable group of virtuoso madrigal singers such as the Ferrarese *concerto secreto* simply encouraged the rapid and full development of this technique" (Newcomb 1980, 76-77). The move to a more virtuosic and technically demanding style depended on the rise of well-trained, dedicated singers rather than amateur musical courtiers. The change in the social function of the madrigal began when it emerged from academy to court, and continued as it journeyed from private court entertainment to the (comparatively) more public stage. In doing so, the changing function of the madrigal entailed a stylistic change, and as performance by highly trained female singers became more sought after by musically educated audiences and more publicly shown off by wealthy patrons, madrigal composition took on a more virtuosic, dramatic style. The widening separation of audience and performer was underway, aided by the revered admiration afforded to the new highly skilled, famous female singers of Rome, Ferrara, Mantua and Florence, by a sophisticated, cultured audience.

The split between audience and performer was due as much (if not more) to the technical demands of the later madrigal as to a shift in performance ideology. The luxuriant madrigals of Striggio, Monteverdi and Luzzaschi, written between 1580-1600, require a vocal dexterity and musicality not previously seen in madrigal composition. As Einstein notes, a "heightening of demands on vocal technique, at least in so far as the preferred or upper voices are concerned," accompanied the introduction of the *stile concertato*. Wider ranges, higher tessituras, vocal dexterity for coloratura passages, and a confidence to sing within increasingly diverse and dissonant harmonic frameworks are all necessary for a successful performance of the luxuriant (and later) madrigals. As Newcomb says, "several fine soloists, a few able singers of normal madrigals, and a few skilled instrumentalists" are required to perform this repertoire; "one has only to imagine a group of amateurs assembling idly one afternoon to perform *Ahi come a un vago sol, E cosi a poco a poco*, or *Questi vaghi concenti*" to comprehend the difference between this new music and earlier court repertoire (Newcomb 1980, 65). This is certainly music written for trained singers with hours to spend in practice, not merely for competent amateurs to sight read.

Examples of the luxuriant madrigal exist in the works of nearly every major madrigal composer of the time, whether or not they wrote directly for the Ferrarese concerto. The anthology dedicated to Laura Peverara, *Il Lauro secco*, for example, is full of samples of this new luxuriant style, including works by Alessandro Striggio.[6] In 1584, Alessandro Striggio "engaged in a bit of cultural espionage" for Grand Duke Francesco de' Medici (Newcomb 1980, 54). Having been invited to the Ferrarese court by Duke Alfonso d'Este to hear his ensemble of women singers, Striggio was highly impressed by the *musica secreta*, and while resident in Ferrara undertook the composition of several pieces in imitation of their style for the Grand Duke of Florence's rival *concerto* to perform. Striggio's letters to the Grand Duke are extremely revealing of the exact style of composition he heard in Ferrara and imitated for Caccini's Florentine *concerto delle donne*.

> This morning I received a letter from [the Ducal secretary] Signor Cavalier Vinta in which, by order of Your Serene Highness, he commissioned me to set to music as soon as possible some madrigals for three sopranos, with diminutions. As soon as I had seen the letter, I composed one piece as an exploratory example, which I am sending to Your Serene Highness so that I may know if the style is pleasing to you. I believe that they are to be for the concerto, but since I know neither by what instruments they will be accompanied nor by what voices, I chose my group at random. As you instruct me in the future, so will I do. (Letter of July 13, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 54).

The madrigals were well received by the Grand Duke, who declared himself "most satisfied by [Striggio's] promptness and diligence" (letter of July 20, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 54), and in further letters Striggio speaks of writing more madrigals for three sopranos with instrumental accompaniment: "fifteen days ago I sent for the *concerto* an ornamented four-voice madrigal for three sopranos . . . I expected a response to it, in order to understand if one wanted the pieces in this way or more difficult, more extreme or less so . . . before leaving Mantua I composed an ornamented dialog for two sopranos in a style different from that of the first piece" (letter of July 29, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 55).

Striggio continued to compose in the Ferrarese style for the Florentine concerto upon his return home to Mantua. On August 24 he writes, "last week I sent Your Serene

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[6] Several works from *Il lauro secco* (1582) and *Il laura verde* (1583) are reprinted in Newcomb 1980, volume II.

Highness *Cor mio, mentr'io vi miro*, adorned with diminutions according to the commission of Your Serene Highness. Now I am sending you the other one, *Per voi, lasso, conviene*, and I should think that they will be successful if they are committed to memory and if the words are well rehearsed by messer Giulio and well projected" (letter of August 24, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 55). Again, both works were well received, the Duke remarking that "the madrigal in music that you sent us has appeared and has been thoroughly approved for our *concerto*" (letter of August 23, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 55). In the weeks that followed, Striggio also set *Lumi miei, cari lumi* along with a dialogue and various other madrigals for the Florentine concerto. One other letter details the type of music expected to be sung by the virtuosic members of Grand Duke Francesco's concerto: "I am sending to Your Serene Highness the first of the four madrigals that were sent to me last week in a letter or Signor Vinta by order of Your Serene Highness. I have set it in conformity with the marginal notations by messer Giulio, that is, with very difficult runs exploring the high and the low registers, and with the conclusion repeated twelve times in various ways by the two sopranos. If it appears too long to Your Highness, you can remove as many [repetitions] as messer Giulio wants, not excepting the end. I will go on to set the others and will send them to Your Highness as soon as possible" (letter of October 5, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 56).

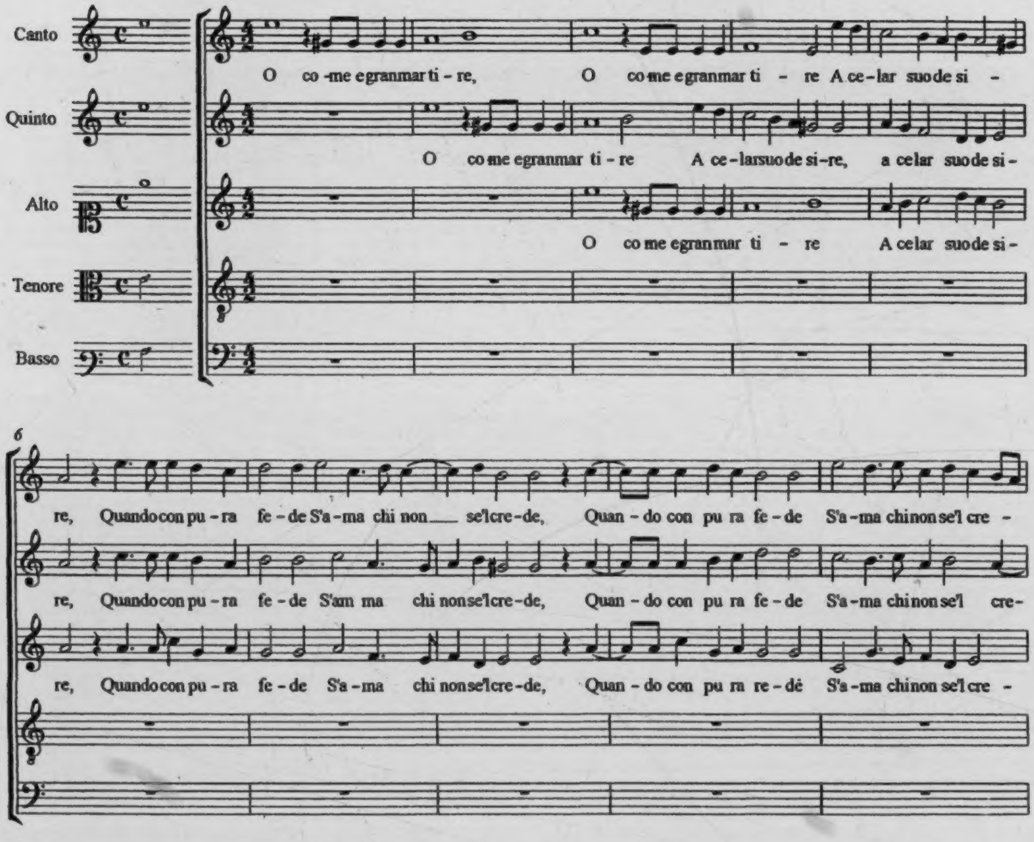
Although none of the specific pieces discussed in Striggio's correspondence have been identified among his surviving opus, Striggio's description corresponds to the compositional style of Luzzaschi's publication of madrigals *a uno, doi, e tre soprani (e cembalo)*, published in Rome in 1601 but clearly written much earlier for the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*. What becomes clear from both Striggio's letters and Luzzaschi's existing madrigals is that the type of music performed by the Ferrarese and Florentine concerti consisted of madrigals set in four and five-voice part-writing, performed by two or three sopranos with the lower voices intended to be performed instrumentally, and with an emphasis on virtuosic diminution and written out ornamentation, extremes of tessitura and repetition with variation. Of the twelve songs in Luzzaschi's 1601 publication, five are set in a mezzo range of g-e", and the remaining seven in a soprano range of d'-c", with one piece requiring all three singers to encompass a range of g-a". These pieces may have been written for different women, for Luzzaschi worked with over ten female singers at Ferrara from 1570 to 1597, but one naturally assumes that these and similar compositions were sung by the famous *tre dame*, Laura Peverara, Anna Guarini and Livia d'Arco, who must have possessed generous ranges and vocal stamina.

The emphasis on higher tessituras and multiple soprano lines which began with the hybrid canzonetta-madrigal achieved even greater attention in the luxuriant style. The new style of madrigal of the 1580s is characterized by part writing which contrasts a small group of female voices with the full five-voice texture, resulting in striking textual and structural effects. Einstein observes that around this time the madrigal developed from a polyphonic work where every voice fully shares the text and is equal in importance, a style exemplified in the work of Arcadelt, Willaert, Rore and Lasso, to a style where "individual voices are only parts of a whole . . . no one voice has the full text . . . and thus the voices begin to combine in two-part motifs or counter-motifs with a view to brevity and striking characterization" as exemplified by Luca Marenzio (Einstein 1949 II:620). But even here the use of instruments on the lower parts was still in vogue, further isolating the female voices from the former male-voice *a cappella* madrigal.

Although Striggio speaks of writing four-voice madrigals, it is clear that the lowest voice or voices will be performed by instruments. "Having written out the intabulation for lute, I then forgot it in Mantua when I left, but this will matter little, for Signor Giulio [Caccini] will be able easily to play the bass part, either on the lute or on the harpsichord" (letter of July 29, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 55). In the context of the *concerto delle donne*, Caccini is functioning as director and instrumentalist, rather than a singer, even though he was renowned as an excellent bass, and could easily have sung the bass line rather than play it on lute and harpsichord. This indicates a preference for hearing women's voices on their own instead of in company with male voices. The separation of male and female singing not only served to highlight the virtuosic talent of the ladies of Ferrara, Mantua and Florence, but also protected male singers from the possible feminization of their musical role. That such gendering was thought a stigma to be avoided is evident in Brancaccio's uneasy position and attitude toward singing with the ladies of the Ferrarese court: in his letter of July 9, 1580, the Neapolitan knight speaks of putting together some *canzone* for the ladies, separating his role as a supporter and supplier of music, rather than a singer equal to the women. Perhaps Brancaccio sided with Signor Gasparo, who cautioned against music performance in Castiglione's dialogue, stating, "I think that music, along with many other vanities, is indeed well suited to women, and perhaps also to others who have the appearance of men, but not to real men; for the latter ought not to render their minds effeminate and afraid of death" (Castiglione 1959, 75). By promoting a reputation as teacher, composer, instrumentalist and director, rather than singer, Caccini and other male musicians could distance themselves from a practice which was often seen as both feminine and feminizing.

In the concerted madrigal, female voices are typically juxtaposed against either male voices, instruments or a mixed voice chorus. This style achieved its most dramatic form in works such as Cavalieri and Guidicioni's *Ballo* "O che nuovo miracolo" (1589), where a trio of female singers is pitted against a cast of seventy or more singers and instrumentalists performing a five-part tutti chorus. The opposition of female and male voices or instruments provides a controlling frame for the highly ornamented female singing on display. Both Nina Treadwell and Susan McClary have found examples of the concerted madrigal which exhibit a contrasting texture "symbolizing women's containment . . . in the patriarchal order" (Treadwell 1997, 65). Treadwell writes of the trio-chorus opposition, "one might interpret these juxtapositions as indicative of a contemporary view of women as disruptive and dangerous, since it is the women who first interrupt the music of the chorus" (Treadwell 1997, 65). Susan McClary examines a variation of the typical texture in Monteverdi's *Lamento della Ninfa*, outlining an elaborate framing device whereby a trio of men alternate with a female soloist in order to "establish and maintain a masculine subject position throughout" (McClary 1991, 89). In these two examples of the advanced concerted texture, male voices begin and end the work, circumscribing the female voice or voices within a hedge of patriarchal control. In early madrigal examples of the still-developing *stile concertato* of the 1580s (often called trio-madrigals for their emphasis on a trio of high voices), female voices typically begin the work, often in imitative entries, establishing their dominance from the outset of the piece.[7] Many pieces exploiting this concerted texture begin with such lengthy duets or trios in the soprano lines that the lower voices enter almost as an afterthought, although the songs nearly always end with a full five-voiced texture. For example, Five of the twenty songs in Monteverdi's third book of madrigals for six voices (1592) begin with the upper three voices alone, and *O come è gran martire* involves the longest opening trio.

Example 7. *O Come e gran martire* by Claudio Monteverdi


Canto
Quinto
Alto
Tenore
Basso
O co-me egranmar ti - re, O come egranmar ti - re A ce-lar suo de si -
O come egranmar ti - re A ce-larsuo de si-re, a celar suo de si -
O come egranmar ti - re A celar suo de si -
6
re, Quandocon pu - ra fe - de S'a-ma chi non se'l cre-de, Quan - do con pu ra fe - de S'a-ma chinonse'l cre -
re, Quandocon pu - ra fe - de S'am ma chi nonse'l cre-de, Quan - do con pu ra fe - de S'a-ma chinonse'l cre-
re, Quandocon pu - ra fe - de S'a-ma chi nonse'l cre-de, Quan - do con pu ra re - dè S'a-ma chinon se'l cre -

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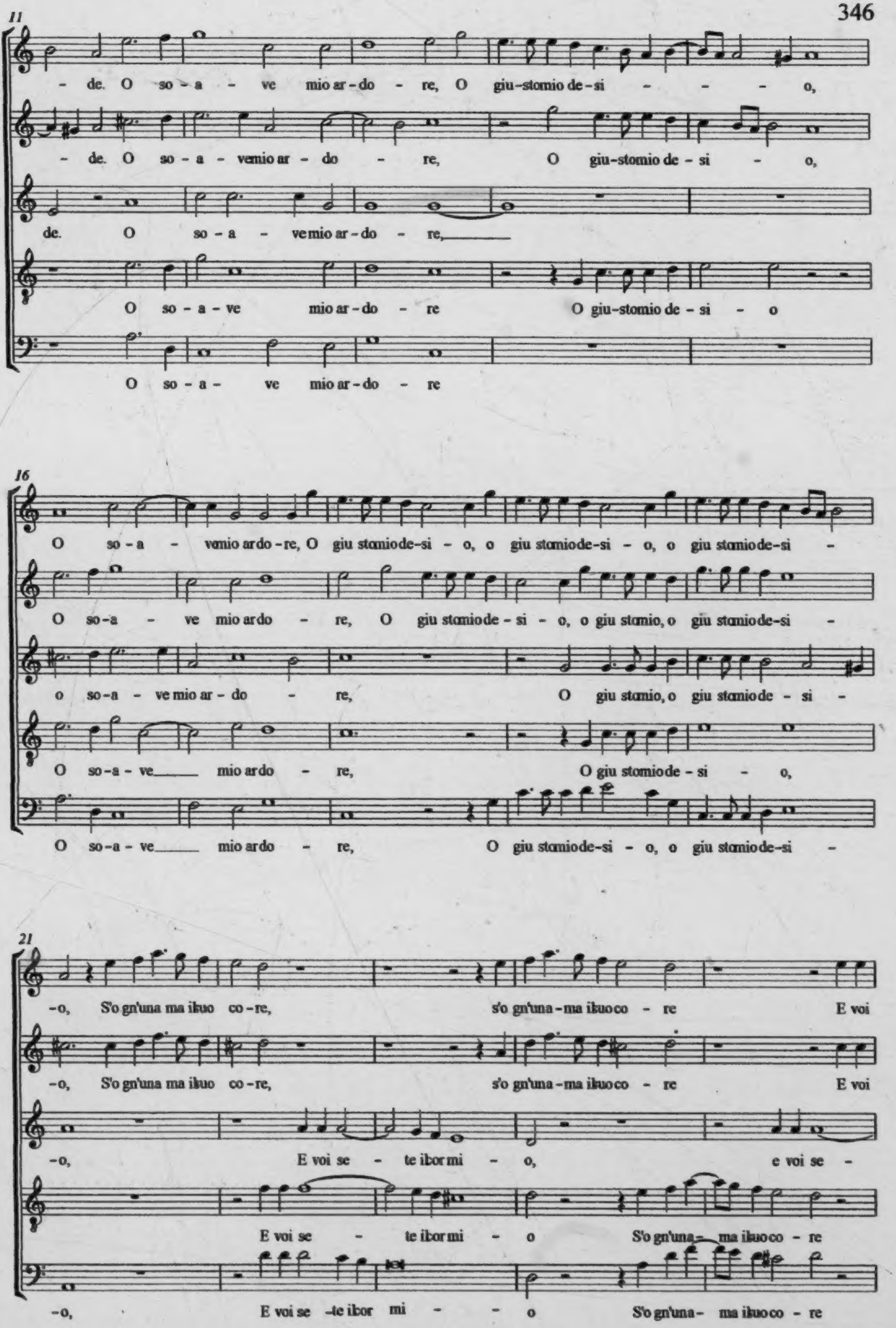
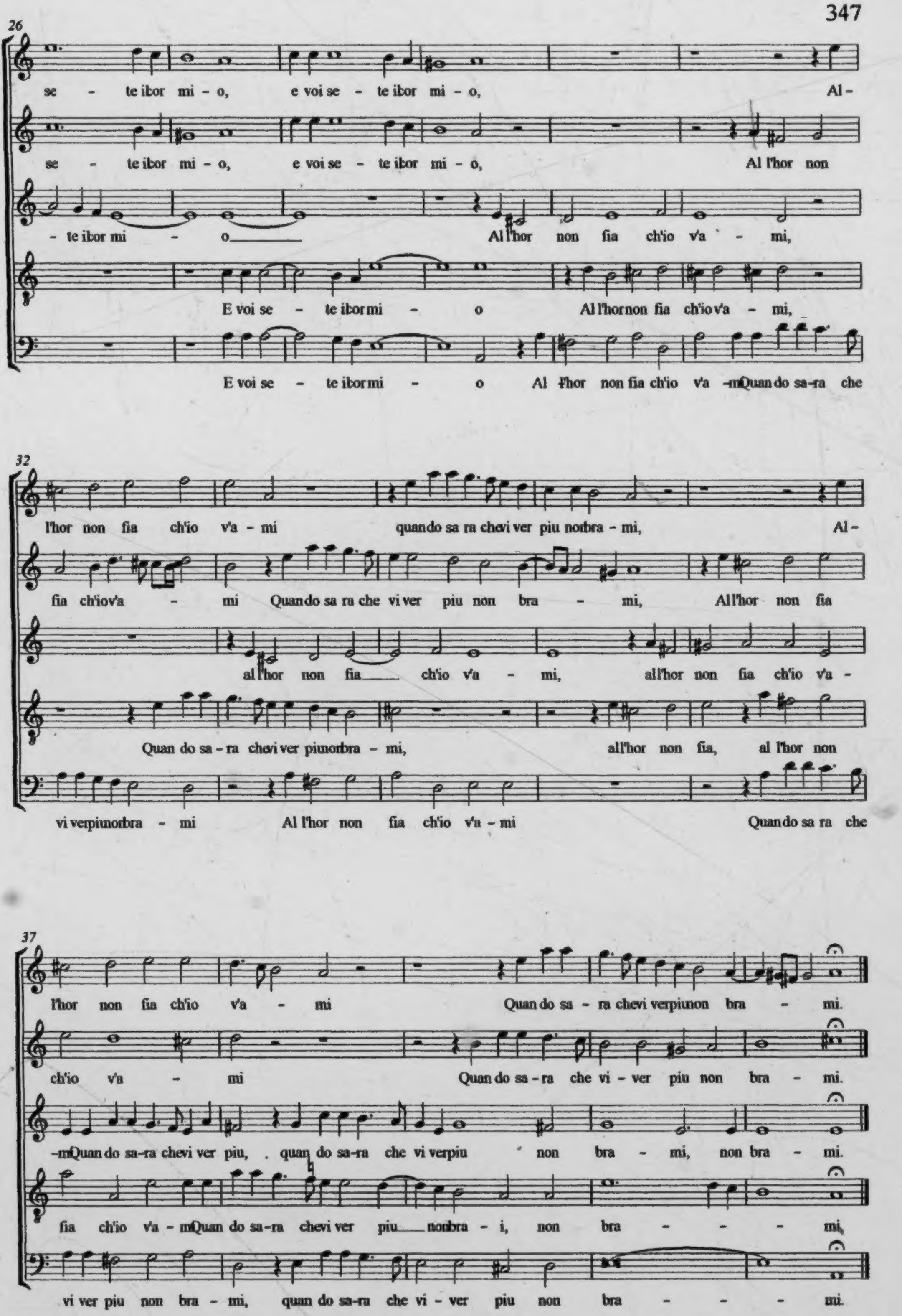
[7] There are many examples from this period: some of the most famous include Marenzio's *Cantate Ninfe* and *Cantava la più vaga pastorella*, Monteverdi's *Quel augellin che canta*, *Lumi, miei cari lumi* or *O come è gran martire*, and *Si com' ai freschi matutini rai* by Giaches Wert; further examples by Wert, Monteverdi, Marenzio, Pallavicino can be found in Einstein 1949 and Newcomb 1980.


11
- de. O so - a - ve mio ar - do - re, O giu - stomio de - si - - - o,
- de. O so - a - vemio ar - do - re, O giu - stomio de - si - o,
de. O so - a - vemio ar - do - re,
O so - a - ve mio ar - do - re O giu - stomio de - si - o
O so - a - ve mio ar - do - re
16
O so - a - vemio ardo - re, O giu stomiode - si - o, o giu stomiode - si - o, o giu stomiode - si -
O so-a - ve mio ardo - re, O giu stomiode - si - o, o giu stomio, o giu stomiode-si -
o so-a - ve mio ar - do - re, O giu stomio, o giu stomiode - si -
O so-a - ve mio ardo - re, O giu stomiode - si - o,
O so-a - ve mio ardo - re, O giu stomiode-si - o, o giu stomiode-si -
21
-o, S'o gn'una ma ilsuo co - re, s'o gn'una - ma ilsuo co - re E voi
-o, S'o gn'una ma ilsuo co - re, s'o gn'una - ma ilsuo co - re E voi
-o, E voi se - te ilbor mi - o, e voi se -
E voi se - te ilbor mi - o S'o gn'una - ma ilsuo co - re
-o, E voi se - te ilbor mi - - o S'o gn'una - ma ilsuo co - re


26
se - te ibor mi - o, e voi se - te ibor mi - o, Al-
se - te ibor mi - o, e voi se - te ibor mi - o, Al l'hor non
- te ibor mi - o Al l'hor non fia ch'io v'a - mi,
E voi se - te ibor mi - o Al l'hor non fia ch'io v'a - mi,
E voi se - te ibor mi - o Al l'hor non fia ch'io v'a - mi Quan do sa-ra che
32
l'hor non fia ch'io v'a - mi quando sa ra che vi ver piu non bra - mi, Al-
fia ch'io v'a - mi Quan do sa ra che vi ver piu non bra - mi, All'hor non fia
al l'hor non fia ch'io v'a - mi, all'hor non fia ch'io v'a -
Quan do sa - ra che vi ver piu non bra - mi, all'hor non fia, al l'hor non
vi ver piu non bra - mi Al l'hor non fia ch'io v'a - mi Quan do sa ra che
37
l'hor non fia ch'io v'a - mi Quan do sa - ra che vi ver piu non bra - mi.
ch'io v'a - mi Quan do sa - ra che vi - ver piu non bra - mi.
- mi Quan do sa-ra che vi ver piu, quan do sa-ra che vi ver piu non bra - mi, non bra - mi.
fia ch'io v'a - mi Quan do sa-ra che vi ver piu non bra - i, non bra - mi.
vi ver piu non bra - mi, quan do sa-ra che vi - ver piu non bra - mi.

The three soprano voices open in exact imitation, declaiming Guarini's bitter lament with a piercing opening 'O' on a high e, falling a minor sixth to the third and rising through "such great pain," so that each successive entry, overlapping the word "martire" relives the piercing agony of the pain of love, like cupid's arrow entering the human breast. The texture then becomes denser and the separate voices cross and are slightly obfuscated on the phrase "of hiding one's desire." After a clean break the three voices move homophonically through a succession of triads where each voice maintains a clear hierarchy to clearly declaim "when in pure faith," opening up to voice crossing and a delicate suspension only on the re-iteration of "one loves a person who does not believe it." When the supporting tenor and bass lines enter in measure eleven on the second quatrain of text, the role of the three voices change: the two sopranos continue to intertwine, sometimes moving together homorhythmically, predominantly in thirds (at measures 11-13, 21-22, 24, 25-29), sometimes delineating a phrase with imitative entries (at measures 14 through 20, and 31-38); the alto voice, however, moves into a unique position between the two high voices and the supporting instrumental (or male voice) lines. Only in one rare instance does the alto rest on top of the tenor and bass lines, moving together with the lower parts (measures 22-24), and three times it joins the polyphonic entries of the two sopranos (m. 19-21, 29-31, and 25-41), in one case outlining almost the entire phrase before the second soprano entry (m. 29-31). In the middle of these passages, the alto holds an independent line, sustaining the phrase "e voi sète il cor mio," ("and you are my heart"), to which the upper voices reply with a high, unaccompanied, echo. Monteverdi saves the most complex counterpoint for last, finishing with a final flourish involving polyphonic entries and imitative phrases between all voices and engaging the full range of four octaves as all five voices come together on the final phrase, "quando sarà che viver più non brami" ("once you desire to live no more").

In *O come è gran martire*, as in many trio-madrigals, the lower voices are rarely given as much prominence, virtuosity or coloratura as are the upper voices. Yet Monteverdi does not have the music devolve to simple homophonic accompaniment, such as is seen, for instance, in the continuo parts of the Luzzaschi madrigals for three sopranos. Rather he engages a delicate interplay between the lower and upper timbres; at times the lower voices function as harmonic support, but more often they act as a prelude to or echo of a phrase heard in the soprano lines, creating a subtle foil against which the upper voices are displayed to advantage. The more contrapuntal nature of the movement between tenor and bass does not necessarily indicate their need to be sung, for the replacement of male voices on these lower lines with accompanying instruments is still tenable. This practice, as we have already indicated, was widespread and served to further highlight the virtuosic female soloists. Further evidence of instrumental performance of Monteverdi's madrigals is seen in the many early English publications of his madrigals as songs "apt for voices, viols and recorders" (see Charteris 2000, viii).

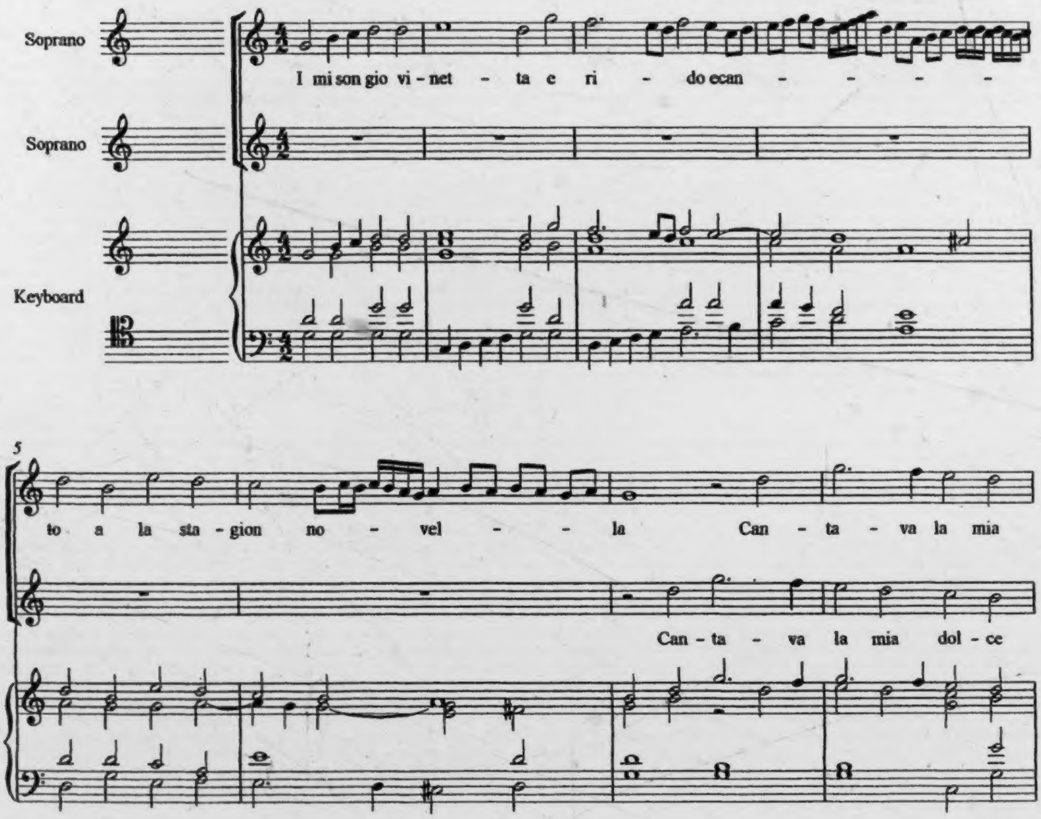
The role of male voices in the early concerted madrigal becomes then one of modest support and service rather than enclosure and control, or at least one of insufficient power to quench the elaborate coloratura of the soprano lines. In fact, one of Artusi's arguments against the new madrigal style objects to the imbalanced emphasis placed on female voices: in the voice of his disgruntled interlocutor Vario, Artusi complains that "the highest part is inadequately controlled by the lowest" (in Cusick 1993, 10). The composers who wrote for the virtuoso sopranos of Ferrara, Mantua and Florence obviously did not share Artusi's avowal that the "high part owes obedience to the lower one," like (as Cusick metaphorically states) a disobedient child in a daughter-father relationship (Cusick 1993, 10). Rather, they embraced the new independence of the female singer and freely celebrated her fame with elaborate coloratura passages that displayed her vocal virtuosity to its fullest, even while they played upon the erotic overtones of flamboyant female performance before a mixed (or male) audience.

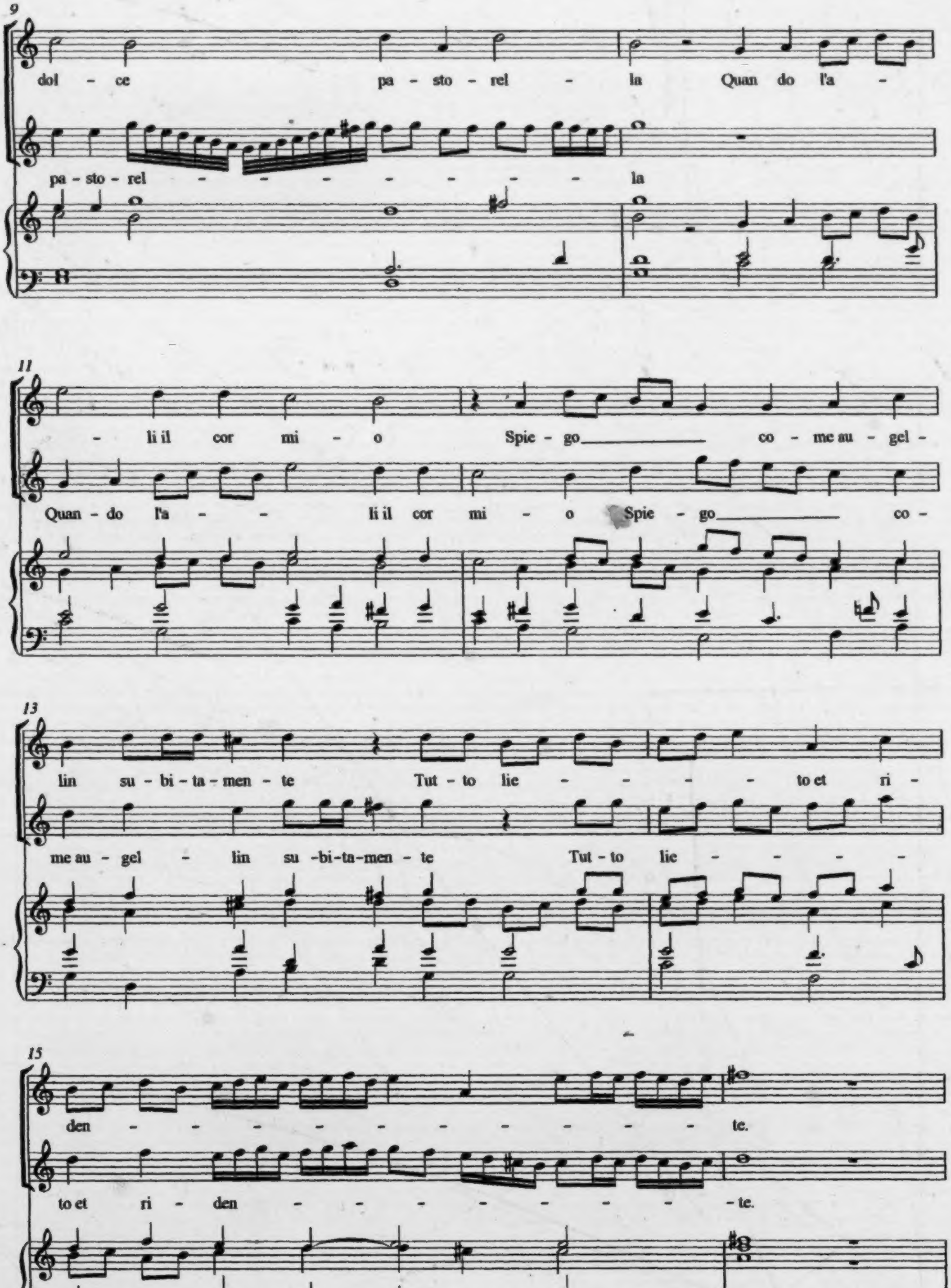
The second major characteristic of the luxuriant style is the extensive use of virtuosic diminution found throughout the madrigals of the of the 1580s: Newcomb observes the "use of diminution not merely as an incidental feature in a single voice but as an essential and identical feature of the thematic material in several voices. This is the single most important defining feature of the new luxuriant style" (Newcomb 1980, 76).

Examples of the use of diminution abound in Wert's and Marenzio's publications of 1581, as well as Marenzio's *First Book of Madrigals* of 1580, which features more complex polyphony saturated with ornamentation, and an emphasis on virtuosity, while Luzzaschi's madrigal publication of 1601 for one, two and three sopranos is full of pyrotechnic displays of vocal coloratura and heavy embellishment.

The opening section of *I' mi son giovinetta* from Luzzaschi's *Madrigali per cantare e sonare a uno, due e tre soprani* (1601) displays the type of written diminution —*tirate e passagi*— which pervades Luzzaschi's 1601 publication, and would likely have been improvised or written in by performers of Wert's and Marenzio's madrigals as well.

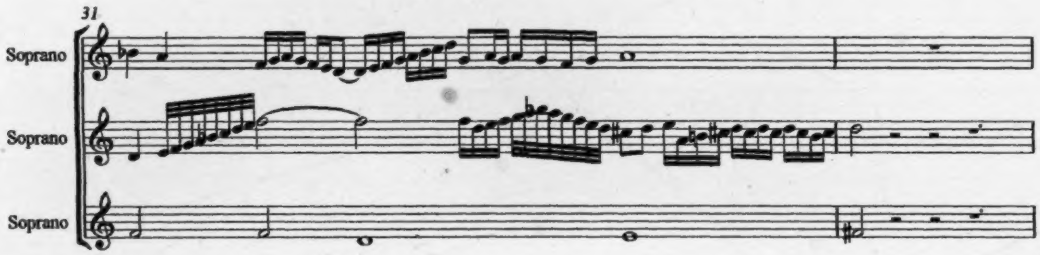
Example 8. From *I' mi son giovinetta* by Luzzasco Luzzaschi


Soprano
Soprano
Keyboard
I mi son gio vi - net - ta e ri - do ecan - - - -
5
to a la sta - gion no - vel - - la Can - ta - va la mia
Can - ta - va la mia dol - ce


9
dol - ce pa - sto - rel - la Quan do l'a -
pa - sto - rel - - - - - - - la
11
- li il cor mi - o Spie - go co - me au - gel -
Quan - do l'a - - li il cor mi - o Spie - go co -
13
lin su - bi - ta - men - te Tut - to lie - - - - to et ri -
me au - gel - lin su - bi - ta - men - te Tut - to lie - - - -
15
den - - - - - - - - - - - te.
to et ri - den - - - - - - - - - te.

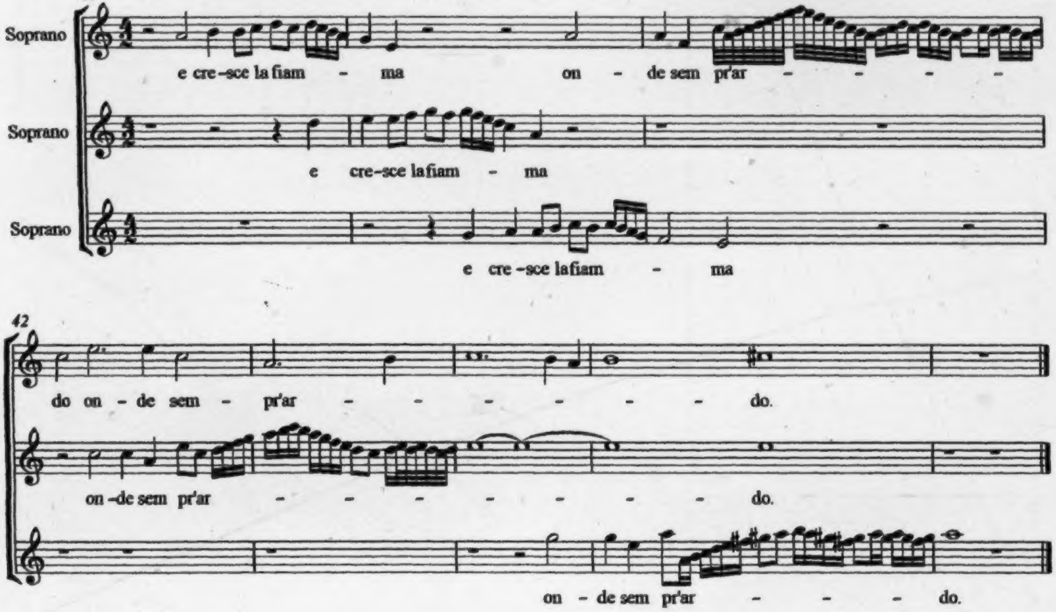
Luzzaschi's diminution comprises both simple mordents and vocal trills surrounding a single note or descending passage, such as on the word "novella" in measure 6, as well as elaborate running passages which encompass an octave or more, as in measure 9. Luzzaschi places his ornamentation both according to the musical phrases at cadence points, and according to conventional madrigalian word-painting, thus the first major embellishment occurs on the word *canto*, and the second at the end of the first textual and musical phrase. As in these two examples, Luzzaschi most often sets elaborate ornamented passages either in a solo passage or against long sustained notes in the accompanying voice or voices; but occasionally he allows two voices (but never more than two) to come together in a very effective demonstration of parallel diminution (Ex. 8, m. 14-16). At other times the voices seem to vie with each other in competing demonstrations of virtuosity (Ex. 9.):

Example 9. From *Non sa che sia dolore* by Luzzasco Luzzaschi

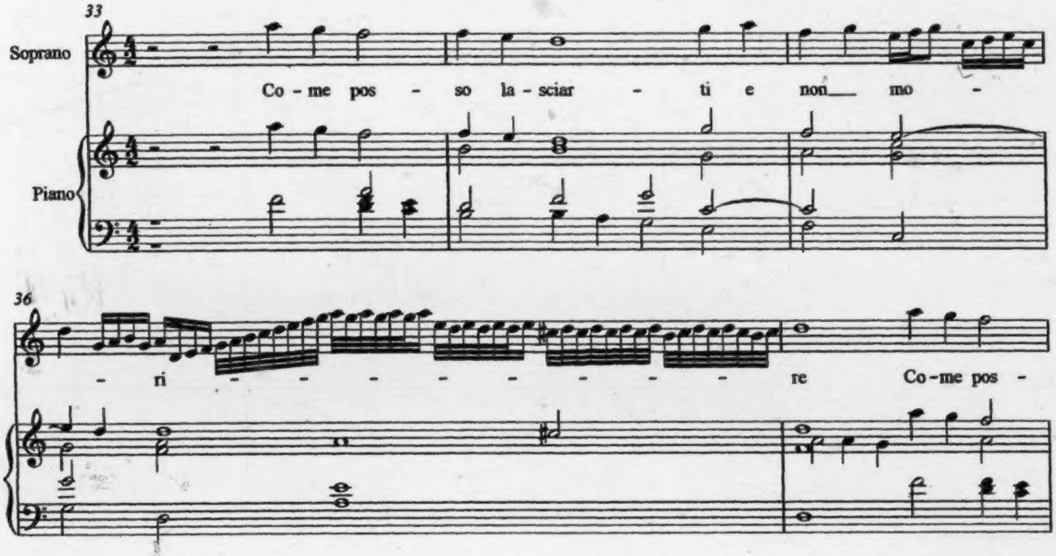


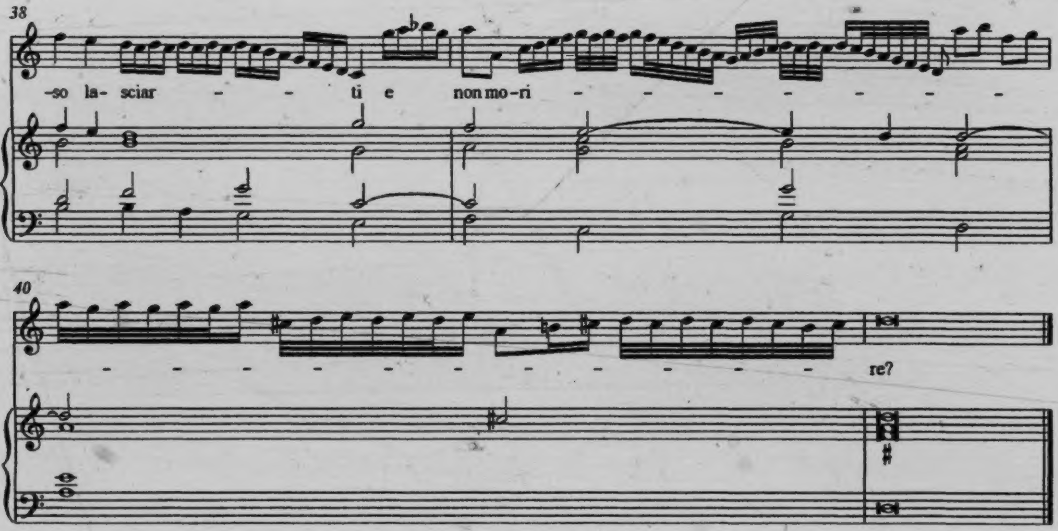
In addition, in what becomes an almost trite expectation, each piece ends in a spectacular cadenza. Occasionally Luzzaschi employs a simpler, but still effective formula, as in *Non sa che sia dolore*, where one voice soars on a long sustained g$''$ while the other two voices move steadily in eighths towards the final cadence (as opposed to the thirty-second notes used in the preceding and following passages). But more often, an extremely rapid and wide-ranging cadenza, highly demanding in vocal flexibility and technique, finishes the piece with a final flourish, as the ecstatic endings of the trio *Occhi del pianto mio* (Ex. 10) and solo *Ch'io non t'ami* (Ex. 11) demonstrate.

Example 10. From *Occhi del pianto mio* by Luzzasco Luzzaschi


39
Soprano
e cre-sce la fiam - ma on - de sem pr'ar - - - -
Soprano
e cre-sce la fiam - ma
Soprano
e cre-sce la fiam - ma
42
do on - de sem - pr'ar - - - - - - do.
on -de sem pr'ar - - - - - - - do.
on - de sem pr'ar - - - do.

Example 11. From *Ch'io non t'ami* by Luzzasco Luzzaschi


33
Soprano
Co - me pos - so la - sciar - ti e non mo -
Piano
36
- ri - - - - - - - - re Co - me pos -


38
-so la- sciar - - ti e non mo-ri - - - - - - -
40
- - - - - - - - - - - - re?

The ornamented style of the 1580s exemplified by Marenzio, Wert, Striggio and Luzzaschi developed as a result of the singing ladies' preoccupation with the virtuosic diminution that was so popular with all who heard them.[8] Vocal diminution was a significant part of the *concerti di donne*'s performance, both within the music composed for them and in their own embellishment of the songs. During his exploration of the music being sung by the Ferrarese *concerto* and imitative composition of music for the Grand Duke of Florence's *musica secreta*, Striggio often mentions the specific composition of diminution as part of the new ornamental style. "I have composed for the concerto a dialog with imitative diminutions for two sopranos," he writes (Striggio, letter of July 29, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 54). Striggio also describes reading along with written out diminutions as the ladies sang them from memory: "the Duke favored me continually by showing me written out all the pieces that they sing by memory, with all the diminutions [*tirate e passaggi*] that they do" (Striggio, letter of July 29, 1584; in Newcomb 1980, 55).

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[8] As quoted earlier, an exception is found in the response of a disgruntled Ambassador Urbani, who, in a report of August 1581, complains that "it was necessary for me simultaneously to play cards, to listen, to admire, and to praise the *passaggi*, the *cadenze*, the *tirate*, and such things— all of which matters I understand little and enjoy less" (in Newcomb 1980, 25).

Striggio's statement seems to indicate that the ornamentation of vocal pieces had, by the 1580s, evolved from a spontaneous embellishment of cadences much after the fashion of the lute song, to a more complex, well thought out ornamentation which was written down with the song itself.

This is not to say that ornamentation had become the province of the composer, for the Ferrarese singers vocally embellished the pieces that they sang. Evidence that the ladies of Ferrara added their own diminutions to written compositions is found in the dedication to the patron of the *concerto delle donne*, Duke Alfsono II d'Este, of Paolo Virchi's First Book of Madrigals à 5 (1584). In his dedication, Virchi maintains that the style of diminution employed by the Ferrarese singers was completely innovative, and that the ornamentation was added on to the completed composition. Virchi writes:

> I do not attribute [the success of my madrigals] so much to my own artifice as to the sweetness of the voices of the Illustrious Ladies who sing them, who, with a marvelous new approach (*dispositione*) and in a new way—not fully understood—of diminutions and ornamentation, easily increase the pleasure of my music, so that I am not equal to their reputation for such excellence. (In Riley 1985, 482)

As Ernest Ferand observes, "in the vocal and instrumental music of [the Renaissance and early Baroque] we have . . . a practice in which . . . the performer's contribution often exceeded that of the composer. It should never be forgotten that the compositions of that time that have come down to us in manuscript or print often present only a pale outline of how they actually sounded, and that the composers themselves often considered it to be their task merely to sketch their work on paper, to present a skeleton and to leave the details of clothing it to the performing singers or players" (Ferand 1961, 13). The female singers of the *concerti di donne* certainly possessed this power to complete a composition, a power which, as Virchi attests, was recognized and encouraged by the male composers who wrote for them.

Yet these women did more than embellish existing music after an established fashion; they were themselves innovators of ornamental style. The historian Giustiniani noted in 1628 that "the ladies of Mantua and Ferrara were highly competent and vied with each other not only in regard to the timbre and training of their voices but also in the design of exquisite passages delivered at opportune points" (Giustiniani 1962, 69). Joanne Riley demonstrates that Tarquinia Molza was an expert in both linear diminution and embellishment, and vertical, contrapuntal improvisation, and that she taught her particular style to the other ladies of Ferrara. "At the court of Ferrara," Riley summarizes, "Molza was involved in developing a style of music that employed simultaneous improvised diminution in a contrapuntal setting— a synthesis of contrapuntal and solo song styles known as the 'luxuriant madrigal.' Tarquinia Molza taught and guided the Ladies of Ferrara, whose public improvisations in this new style excited well-known male composers to imitate them in written compositions" (Riley 1985, 483). Not only the Ferrarese *concerto* members but other female *virtuosi* were involved in designing and establishing the ornamental madrigal style. Giustiniani credits "the famous Vittoria" Archilei whom he hails as "almost originat[ing] the true method of singing for females" with spreading the new florid and virtuosic singing style throughout Italy (in Bowers 1987, 122). Clearly the women singers of the late sixteenth century, though not producing written compositions, were nevertheless instrumental in developing the highly embellished luxuriant madrigal style.

The copious diminution practiced by the ladies of Ferrara and included in works written for them continued to affect the development of the madrigal through the turn of the seventeenth century. According to Anthony Newcomb, "*concerti* of virtuoso singers encouraged the incorporation of diminution into the written language of the madrigal, which in turn gradually brought about a change in the composer's attitude toward part-writing and toward the treatment of dissonance" (Newcomb 1980, 65). After the luxuriant style of the 1580s had run its course, a new Ferrarese style of the 1590s marked the birth of the *seconda prattica*; female virtuosi continued to influence this "last major stylistic movement in the history of the madrigal" (Newcomb 1980, 113). Eight books printed by the Ferrarese court printer Baldini from 1594 to 1596 contain the works of three major composers of this style, Luzzaschi, Gesualdo and Fontanelli, and at Rome and Mantua, Marenzio, Wert and Monteverdi responded to the growing need for women's solo and ensemble music, propelled by increasing ornamentation into a new examination of dissonance.

The foremost defender of the *seconda prattica*, Claudio Monteverdi, was impacted by singing of the "tre dame" of Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga's court at Mantua: Fenlon comments that Monteverdi's "adoption of the virtuoso manner in *Il terzo libro de madrigali a cinque voci* of 1592, the first of his works to be published after his arrival at the Gonzaga court [in 1590], has been remarked upon by nearly every writer who has discussed the book" (Fenlon 1980, 145). The composer's use of texts by Guarini, the tutelage of Giaches Wert, and the influence of Marenzio and Luzzaschi evident in his first two books of madrigals reveal further connections between Monteverdi and the singing ladies of Ferrara. Through his long career Monteverdi worked with and wrote music for over ten prominent female *virtuose*, including his wife Claudia Cattaneo; he could not help but be influenced by the presence of these women so highly admired in the secular music sphere.

The ornamented virtuosic style of the late Italian madrigal is closely allied with women's performance practice in the Renaissance. The virtuosic custom was of course not practiced solely by women; but even when featured by male singers it retains some ties to women's performance practice. Renowned singing teacher Giulio Caccini, for instance, had developed his own particular method of embellishment, yet he is connected, as a teacher of women, to women's performance practice and ensemble singing. On October 11, 1592, Caccini records in a letter to Florence how he taught his particular style of ornamentation to the ladies of Ferrara at the explicit request of Duke Alfonso.[9] The semi-improvised practice of diminution is also linked to women's genres, especially early lute songs, *arie* and *frottole*, and thus was a natural addition to the new pseudo-monody and trio-madrigals being written for the Italian *concerti di donne*.[10]

The practice of ornamentation perfectly suited the Renaissance perception of women as ornamental, graceful and artificial. Castiglione, we have noted, defined the ideal court lady as an ornament of the court and an adornment to the courtier: "just as no court, however great, can have adornment or splendor or gaiety in it without ladies, neither can any Courtier be graceful or pleasing or brave, or do any gallant deed of chivalry, unless he is moved by the society and by the love and charm of ladies: even discussion about the Courtier is always imperfect unless ladies take part in it and add their part of that grace by which they make the Courtiership perfect and adorned" (Castiglione 1959, 204-05). Thus the graceful, ornamented style of singing was fully aligned with the role of the court lady. It was for this role that Duke Alfonso II brought Laura Peverara to his court. Upon seeing her beauty and hearing her sing, we are told, he "immediately conceived the desire to have her as an ornament to the Ferrarese court" (Urbani, letter of 1580; in Newcomb 1970, 40), a role she would fulfill both through her physical beauty and through her voice. Given the female court singer's role as a visible and audible ornament, "it should come as no surprise, then, that in a number of contemporary accounts of the *concerto delle donne*, physical beauty was an attribute given as much, if not more, importance than musical talent" (Treadwell 1997, 58).[11]

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[9] This letter has been quoted in chapter 7, page 297.

[10] On the vocal embellishment of the Italian lute song, see chapter five.

Castiglione may have found the highly virtuosic display of diminution favoured later in the century too showy for his discreet and gracious court lady. We recall that he preferred that "even those [arts] that are becoming to a woman I would have her practice in a measured way and with that gentle delicacy that we have said befits her; and so when she dances, I should not wish to see her make movements that are too energetic and violent; nor when she sings or plays, use those loud and oft-repeated diminutions that show more art than sweetness" (Castiglione 1959, 210). Clearly, by the end of the sixteenth century artistry was valued more than delicacy and sweetness in the female singers of the northern courts, for the music preferred by female *virtuose* and their audiences was full of showy diminution. In fact, as James Chater remarks, art and artifice, especially in noblewomen and courtiers, were "upheld as virtue[s] in the sixteenth century, [and] may be partially redefined as style consciousness and self-consciousness" (Chater

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[11] This aspect of visual and aural beauty is also discussed in chapter four.

1981, 7). The self-conscious fashioning of the late sixteenth-century female singer as part modest court lady, but more fully dedicated artist and public entertainer, allows composer Paolo Virchi to still refer conventionally to "the sweetness of the voices of the Illustrious Ladies who sing" while praising their modern "new approach" and technical display "of diminutions and ornamentation" which contribute to "their reputation for such excellence" (in Riley 1985, 482).

Dramatic Women and Dramatic Music: Performers on Stage and in Court

The self-conscious display of technical accomplishment and dramatic expression of spectacular embellishments was apropos to the new status of performing women as dramatic entertainers. In Giustiniani's delineation of the development of madrigal style, he particularly notes the ladies who sang together, accompanied by lute, theorbo or harpsichord, "in the representations of Rome" (Giustiniani 1962, 77). These elaborate staged spectacles, often performed before large upper-class audiences in the banquet halls, gardens and theatres of the Italian courts, were particularly popular at weddings and during carnival season, and not limited to Rome. From the late fifteenth century, women regularly performed in staged *intermedi*, singing madrigals and solo songs between the acts of spoken drama, or appeared as allegorical, mythological, and historical characters in the musical *tableaux vivants* that were often featured at special celebrations. For example, Paula Poccino sang with Bartolomeo Tromboncino and several of their Mantuan companions for the *intermedio* of Plautus's comedy *Asinaria*, presented during the wedding festivities of Alfonso d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara in 1502; in 1508, Dalida de' Putti took the role of a shepherd in a dramatic eclogue by Ercole Pio which compared the virtues of Lucrezia Borgia, Isabella d'Este and Elisabetta Gonzaga; Machiavelli's mistress Barbera Salutari performed *canzoni* written by Machiavelli during the interludes of *Mandragola* and *Clizia* in 1518-1525; Sadie and Samuel note that "Le donne di Giulio Romano," especially Settimia and Francesca Caccini dominated the performance of Florentine *intermedi* (Sadie and Samuel 1985 94); Eufemia Joloza appeared as Queen Cleopatra in a 1558 Neapolitan *intermedio* called *La nave di*

Cleopatra; and Vittoria Archilei sang solos composed especially for her by Emilio de' Cavalieri, accompanying herself on the lute and improvising elaborate ornamentation, during the *intermedio La Pellegrina*, performed for Ferdinando de Medici and Christine de Lorraine's wedding in 1589.

While female singers developed a tradition of dramatic musical performance, female actresses forged a place for women in Italian theatre. By the mid-sixteenth century, women performed with popular *commedia dell' arte* companies, both in common civic arenas (marketplaces, open grounds, taverns and public squares) and in private court theatres. The best singers and actresses, such as Isabella Andreini and Virginia Ramponi, gathered significant fame and their talents were celebrated across Europe. Many *commedia* actresses were also highly skilled musicians, for their parts required them to sing and play on stage. *Strambotti*, *frottole*, arias and *canzoni* were performed to lute, theorbo or chittarone accompaniment within the plays. With women performing to popular acclaim both in spoken drama and musical theatrics, the function of singer and actress often merged in a single performer. While singer Settimia Caccini made her stage debut at age nine in the 1600 premiere of her father's opera *Il rapimento di Cefalo*, and awed audiences in a 1602 performance of Ottavio Rinuccini's *Euridice*, actress Virignia Ramponi, known as Florinda on the *commedia* stage, played to admiring audiences in Italy, France, Prague and Vienna with her *Compagnia dei Fedeli*. She also sang the title role of Monteverdi & Rinuccini's *Il ballo delle ingrate*, one of many dramatic musical entertainments performed for the wedding festivities of Francesco Gonzago and Margherita de Savoy in Mantua in 1608, and moved audiences to tears as Arianna in the 1608 premiere of Monteverdi's *L'Arianna*.

As music and drama merged in *intermedi*, madrigal cycles, staged *balletti* and early opera —all performance forms which featured the rising virtuosi— the dramatic function of female music was mirrored in the new dramatic style of the madrigal, and manifested in the music of the *seconda prattica*. Although most often characterized by its bold use of dissonance, the tenets of the *seconda prattica* practiced by composers such as Gesualdo, Marenzio, Luzzaschi and Monteverdi emphasized a dramatic musical reflection of emotionally intense texts that challenged the accepted norm. In his later works, even Giaches Wert turned to more serious dramatic style, what MacClintock calls a harbinger of the *seconda pratica*. His expressionistic madrigals translate extravagant emotions expressed in the text into similarly extravagant musical gestures through use of extremes of tessitura, unusual vocal intervals, and dissonance. In both Monteverdi's *stile rappresentivo*, and what Tomlinson calls his "epigrammatic style, " the increasingly dramatic nature of the music of the *seconda pratica* is evident.

The dramatic madrigal spilled over into the pseudo-monody and solo song style of the late sixteenth-century and early baroque periods, elaborating upon previous explorations of the *stile concertato*, and often still favouring the spectacular high tessituras and coloratura ornamentation which characterized women's solo and ensemble singing. The musical drama expressed in the new madrigal at the end of the century was played out in performance, as theatrical *intermedi* and dramatic *balli* demanded that the madrigal function as more than pleasurable chamber song. Female performers were at the forefront of this intensifying merger of music and drama. From the staged and costumed *balletti* of the Duchess of Ferrara's female dancers, through the expressive but appropriate gestures which accompanied the performance of the *concerto delle donne*, from the theatrical efforts of singer-patrons like Agnese Argotti to the presence in court and on stage of virtuosic singers and actresses such as Vittoria Archilei, Settimia and Francesca Caccini, Caterina Martinelli, and Isabella Andreini and Virginia Ramponi, women musicians were considerably involved in the drama of music. Through their influence on musical style and composition, these reigning *virtuose* helped move secular art music onto the Italian stage.

The female singer had evolved alongside the music she performed. By the end of the century, women's performance entailed more than court ladies performing self-accompanied lute songs on rare occasions, to display their cultivation before a privileged audience, or to amuse their private, female court. Instead, the most successful female singers of the late sixteenth century, though still alluded to as *gentildonne* and hired as ladies-in-waiting, undertook rigorous careers which involved long hours of practice and training, and specific musical duties at court. Almost in defiance of the gentle reputations with which they were cloaked, many of these women taught singing, directed women's ensembles, and performed not only in private court settings, but also for banquets, religious services and on the stage—positions which formerly had been occupied almost exclusively by professional male musicians. As they fashioned their own roles as court performers, so these women shaped the music they sang. Incorporating elements of established female genres such as the solo lute song, highlighting the higher tessituras suited to the female voice, and encouraging elaborate ornamentation and dramatic interplay, the composers who wrote for these acclaimed virtuosi responded to the particular musical strengths modeled by female court performers and accepted as ideally feminine by contemporary ideology. The influence of *virtuose* singers upon musical style and composition proved to be a powerful and lasting force.

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APPENDIX

Women Patrons and Performers in Italy, c.1500-1600

Rafaella Aleotti (c.1570-1646)

Although some believe Rafaella is the convent name chosen by Vittoria Aleotti (Cook & LaMay 1984), there is some evidence that this is in fact Vittoria's older sister (Cavicchi and Cusick 1995). The daughter of Giovanni Battista Aleotti, a Ferrarese ducal architect and stage designer, Rafaella was dedicated to the church as a child, but studied music with Alessandro Milleville and Ercole Pasquini. At the convent of San Vito, Rafaella became the organist and *maestra di concerto* of San Vito's famed *concerto grande* (a group which, according to Bottrigari, existed from the 1570s); she also assisted in other aspects of the convent's musical education, notably as a teacher of singing and various instruments. Aleotti published one madrigal in *Il Giardino de musici ferrarese madrigali* in 1591, and a book of motets, *Sacrae cantiones* (1593).

Vittoria Aleotti (various dates given from c.1573-1578, d. after 1620).

Vittoria was the second of five daughters born to Ferrarese ducal architect and stage designer Giovanni Battista Aleotti. She was taught music along with her older sister (beginning at age five), first by the famous Alessandro Milleville and then Ercole Pasquini. Vittoria was especially gifted at singing, harpsichord and composition. At age fourteen (c.1592) she was sent to the convent of San Vito for further study. In 1593 she published her *Ghirlanda di madrigali*, on texts by G.B. Guarini; the dedication to Signor Hippolito Bentivoglio written by Aleotti's father, outlines Vittoria's education and skill, and implies that she was the younger sister of Rafaella.

Isabella Andreini (1562-1604)

The most celebrated actress of the *Commedia dell' arte*, Andreini made her acting debut in the late 1570s with the *Compagnia dei Gelosi*, which she later directed along with her husband Francesco. A poetess and author, she published the pastoral play *Mirtillo* and various *Rime*, and was welcomed as a member of several prestigious literary academies including the *Accademia degli Intenti* in Pavia. Andreini was admired by patrons Maria, Francesco and Ferdinando de' Medici, Charles Emanuel I of Savoy, Vincenzo I Gonzaga, Francis I and Henri IV of France, Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini, and poets Tasso, Marino and Chiabrera wrote verses in her praise. Her musical skills (she possessed a fine singing voice and was a skilled lutenist) were hailed as "soavissimo tocco nella musica" (in Newcomb 1975, 103). Isabella had seven children, and after her death in 1604 a commemorative medal was minted in France with her picture and the words, *Aeterna fama.*

Beatrice d'Aragona (c. 1444-1500s)

A courtly (amateur) singer and significant music patron, Beatrice was the oldest daughter of King Ferdinando of Naples. As wife of King Matthias Corvin, she reigned as Queen of Hungary. Beatrice was taught music by the Flemish theorist and composer Johannes Tinctoris who was employed as chapelmaster at the court of Naples. Three music treatises, including Tinctoris' famous music dictionary are dedicated to Beatrice.

Eleanora d'Aragona (1446-1493)

The fourth child of King Ferdinando of Naples and sister to Beatrice, in 1473 Eleanora d'Aragona married Ercole I d'Este of Ferrara (who reigned 1471-1505). She received 2710 ducats per year as an annual income from her husband. She is the dedicatee of Bartolomeo Goggio's *De*

Laudibus mulierum (1487). Eleanora was a fine singer and harpist and she oversaw her children's musical education. She was an interesting woman, who loved music, engaged in many charitable works, patronized music and the arts, commissioned altars and adorned churches, owned and bred a special breed of greyhounds which were held in high esteem, and enjoyed French and Spanish romances. She also had considerable courage, for she assumed sole command of the city of Ferrara when it was besieged by Venice in the war of 1482-84.

Tullia d'Aragona (c.1508-1556)

A Roman courtesan and poet, Tullia was musically gifted: "she possessed a voice of great charm and was an excellent performer on the lute" (Masson 1975, 89). Her mother, Giulia Campana (Giulia Ferrarese) was also a courtesan, and her father was speculated to be Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona, whose name she claimed. Known as the "intellectual courtesan," Tullia's literary gifts and intellectual interests attracted many literary men to the salons she hosted in Rome, Florence, Ferrara and Venice. She was the dedicatee of histories, the principal character in literary dramas and debates, the subject of flattering verses and eclogues, a friend of princes, muse of poets, and mistress of rich merchant-bankers, prominent noblemen and highly placed clergy. Included among her many admirers are Filippo Strozzi, Jacobo Nardi, Sperone Speroni, Bernardo Tasso, Ludovico Domenichi, Girolamo Muzio, Ercole Bentivoglio, Benedetto Varchi, Alessandro Arrighi, Dr Lattanzio Benucci, Simone Porzio, Antonio Francesco Grazzini, and Bishop Ugolino Martelli of Glandeva. Even Isabella d'Este was curious about this celebrated woman; reporting on the Roman courtesan's visit to Ferrara in 1537-1541, the Mantuan Marchesa's agent Battista Stambellino writes, "she is most delightful, discreet and intelligent, also gifted with excellent and 'divine' manners; she can sing at sight any motet or song. In conversation she has a voice of unique charm, and carries herself so well that there is not a man or woman in these parts who is her equal. Even though that most excellent and illustrious lady the Marchioness of Pescara [Vittoria Colonna] is here, as Your Excellency knows" (letter of June 13, 1537; in Masson 1975, 102). The outspoken courtesan also acquired several enemies among the literate, including Pietro Aretino, who called her poetry "affected Petrarchan rubbish" (*Raggionamenti*, 1535), Lorenzo Venier who labelled her "the most abject of whores" (in *La Tariffa delle puttane di Venetia*, 1535), Bernardino Ochino whose sermons against music and dancing Tullia openly challenged, and Firenzuola (an educated, literary man and monk of Vallombrosa).

Of Tullia's musical talent, Niccolo Martelli writes in 1546, "[you] fill with astonishment those who hear you sing so sweetly, and with that white and beautiful hand play so beautifully whatever instrument you please" (in Masson 1975, 113); Verdelot set two madrigals —"Non mai donna più bella" and "Ardenti miei sospiri"— in homage to her singing. A collection of poems by her and about her by illustrious male poets was published as *Rime* in 1547, and dedicated to the Grand-Duchess of Florence. The same year Tullia also published *Il Dialogo dell'Infinità di Amore* (Venice 1547). Her narrative poem *Guerrin Meschino* was written in Florence but not published until after her death. A harpsichord, twelve books of music and a broken lute were inventoried among Tullia's belongings at her death in 1556. She was survived by her son Celio.

Flaminia d'Aragona (fl. mid-sixteenth century)

Mentioned by Einstein as one of the many courtesans to whom poets dedicated their works, praising her musical skill, little is known about this Venetian woman (Einstein 1949, I:187-90).

Isabella d'Aragona (fl.1490-1500)

The wife of Giangaleazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan (a sickly young man whose duchy was governed by his uncle Ludovico *Il Moro* both during and after his lifetime), Isabella d'Aragona shared a love of music with her cousin and rival Beatrice d'Este (wife of Ludovico Sforza). On January 13, 1490, she danced before the court at a *Festa del Paradiso* that was held in her honour by Ludovico; the festivities included dancing and a representation which began at 11:30 pm, with "many songs and instrumental music that was very sweet and soft" (in Merkley 1999, 422). Isabella was noticeably fond of music and dancing, and within her household she employed Andrea Cossa, Italian lutenist, singer & composer. Court chronicles record her particular use of Cossa's performance skills during illnesses and times of recuperation.

Vittoria Archilei (1550-c.1625)

Nicknamed *La Romanina,* Archilei is one of the most well known virtuosas of the Roman and Florentine courts; she was a member of the first *concerto delle donne* at Florence in 1584, and also a member of a Roman *concerto delle donne* under patronage of the Orsini family. Her career followed that of her husband, singer and lutenist Antonio Archilei, who was in the service of Cardinal Alessandro Sforza and Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici in Rome. Ferdinando later became Grand Duke of Florence in 1587 and paid the couple a combined income of 300 scudi per year. Many of Vittoria's exciting performances have been well-noted, including the intermezzo *La Pellegrina,* performed in 1589 for Ferdinando de Medici and Christine de Lorraine's wedding, where she accompanied herself on the lute, improvising elaborate ornamentation on a solo composed especially for her by Emilio de' Cavalieri, and the *Mascherata di ninfe di Senna* produced in Florence in 1611, for which she composed the music that she sang "with her usual grace and angelic voice" (Jacopo Cicognini, in Bowers 1987 121). Archilei was praised by composers Jacopo Peri (dedication to *L'Euridice*), Giulio Caccini, Claudio Monteverdi and Sigismondo d'India (*Le Musiche,* 1609), who all wrote music for her voice. In 1628 Vincenzo Giustiniani hailed her as "the famous Vittoria" who had "almost originated the true method of singing for females" (in Bowers 1987, 122), and credited her for spreading the new florid and virtuosic singing style throughout Italy.

Livia d'Arco (fl. 1579-1598)

Singer and viol player Livia d'Arco was a member of the renowned Ferrarese *concerto delle donne.* The daughter of Massimiliano, Conte d'Arco, Livia was a member of an old and noble Manutan family. In 1579 she came to Ferrara in the entourage of the young Duchess Margherita Gonzaga, and while at the Ferrarese court she studied voice with Luzzaschi and Molza, and took up the viol. By 1583 Livia was performing with Laura Peverara and Anna Guarini in Ferrara's *musica secreta.* Her marriage in 1585 to Count Mario Alfonso Bevilacqua did not hinder her performing career; d'Arco continued to take part in the performances of the *concerto delle donne* until at least 1598, even after the dissolution of the Este court. Tasso wrote five sonnets and three madrigals in praise of Livia (but without mentioning her singing).

Agnese Argotta (fl. 1580s)

The wife of Prospero del Carretto and Marchesa di Grana, Agnese Argotta may have been connected with Mantuan court as early as 1581. By 1587 she had taken Vincenzo Gonzaga as her lover and was installed in the Mantuan Palazzo del Te by the early 1590s. Argotta was thoroughly involved in Ferrarese and Mantuan literary and artistic circles, and had some connection with the Accademia degli Invaghiti, as she corresponded with academy director Bernardo Marliani. At the Palazzo del Te, Argotta set up her own small academy "principally devoted to the arts of versification and music" (in Fenlon 1980, 149). Her academy produced the poetic anthology *Tesoro delle ninfe,* and may also have produced Giaches Wert's tenth book of madrigals, "which includes many madrigals to texts in the new madrigal style of Tasso and Guarini" — a style that also "characterises the *Tesoro,* which is dedicated to Agnese and refers to her fondness for both music and poetry" (Fenlon 1980, 149). A single piece in Giacomo Moro's *Gli encomii musicali* of 1585 is dedicated to

Agnese. Her most ambitious project as a music patron was the Mantuan production of *Il pastor fido* and its accompanying *intermedi* on the theme of the harmony of the four elements, which she directed the arrangements for. Rehearsals began in November 1591, then stopped and were taken up again April 1592. After more difficulties, and a brief attempt to take up the production again in 1593, the project was abandoned until 1598. *Il pastor fido* was finally performed in courtyard of the Palazzo del Te in 1598. The Marchesa was also a performer, and one of Manfredi's *Cento madrigali* recalls a performance that moved the poet to tears: "Ella suonava, e cantava una volta, fra l'altre, alcune cose, e sì soavemente, ch'io piansi, ella col proprio fazzoletto in atto piacevolissimo mi asciugi le lagrime" (in Fenlon 1980, 149).

Vincenza Armani (fl.1560s-1569)

Singer and actress Vincenza Armani was acclaimed for her *commedia dell'arte* performances of the 1560s under the stage name Lidia. Her brilliant career was unfortunately cut short when she was poisoned by a rival in love in 1569 (*Dizionario biografico degli italiani.* Rome: Treccani, 1960). Armani is the subject of an elaborate printed encomium by Adriano Valerini of Verona, *Oratione d'Adriano Valerini Veronese: In morte della Divina Signora Vincenza Armani, Comica Eccellentissima. . . . Con alquante leggiadre e belle Compositioni di detta Singora Vincenza* (Vincenza, 1570). Valerini claims that she spoke fluent Latin at age 15, and "by herself wrote madrigals, set them to music, and sang them; she was a most graceful player of various instruments, a worthy sculptress in wax, fluent and profound in conversation, and a very fine actress" (in Newcomb 1975, 102).

Caterina Assandra (c.1590s-1622)

As a young girl, singer and composer Caterina Assandra was taught music by private tutors maintained by her father, as preparation for religious life. The publisher Filippo Lomazzo dedicated Giovan Paolo Cima's *Partito de ricercari, & canzoni alla francese* to the young Caterina in 1606, saying,

> Knowing therefore how great is the desire of your father that Your Excellency be adorned with all the virtues, maintaining for you teachers of letters, and of music both in singing as well as in playing various sorts of instruments customarily used in church to praise God, I am sure that you will be grateful, that besides the many books of music by excellent authors that he already asked me for in order to give Your Excellency greater occasion to learn, I have added to them now these, and dedicate them to you. (In Bowers 1987, 130)

In 1609 Assandra entered the convent of Sant'Agata di Lomello, near Milan, where she continued her musical studies with Don Bendetto Rè, who is listed on the titlepage of her book of motets as her "Maestro di contraponto." In 1609 Assandra published *Motetti à due, & trè voci, per cantar nell' organo copn il basso continuo . . . Opera seconda* (Milan: L'herede di Simon Tini, & Filippo Lomazzo, 1609); later motets appeared in two anthologies of sacred music, *Siren coelestis* (1616) & *Promptuarii musicus concentus ecclesiasticos* (1622).

Avogadri sisters (fl. 1589)

Giulia, Constessa di Rollo, is the only named of three sisters from this high-ranking noble Ferrarese family who served Duchess Lucretia of Urbino. The Avogadri sisters sang in a rival *concerto delle donne* established by the Duchess of Urbino in the late 1580s, at her court in the palace of her brother Duke Alfonso of Ferrara (Newcomb 1980; Cook & LaMay 133).

Leonora Baroni (1611-1670)

Leonora Baroni was the talented eldest daughter of Adriana Basile and Muzio Baroni. Born in Mantua, she was accorded the benefits of a court upbringing, including musical education. Lenora achieved great acclaim as a soprano, making a successful debut in Naples in 1627 at age 16, and undertaking a solo tour that same year. She worked with her mother and sister under the patronage of the Rospigliosi family in Rome from 1630. In 1640 she married Giulio Castellani; they had no children. In 1644 Baroni was offered a position in Paris with the Queen Regent of France, Anne of Austria, but she returned to Rome after only a few months.

Caterina Baroni (1613-c.1670)

The second daughter of Adriana Basile, Caterina was also born and raised at the Mantuan court. As a soloist, she was less successful than Leonora, but she performed in ensembles with Leonora and Adriana.

Adriana Basile (c.1580-after 1637)

Born in c.1580, outside Naples, renowned contralto Adriana Basile was educated for a musical career, likely at the convent of S. Martino in Naples, which was known for its musical nuns and training during 1590-1600. The excellence of her singing soon established Basile as the idol of Neapolitan society; she also performed on the harp and Spanish guitar. In 1608 she married Muzio Baroni, and was recruited to the Mantuan court by Vincenzo Gonzaga in 1610. The Duke went to great lengths to persuade her to come to Mantua, negotiations having begun in 1608. A Mantuan recruiting agent wrote that "Adriana knew more than 300 songs in Italian and Spanish from memory, and that she could sing all kinds of madrigals with such confidence that no singer could excel her" (Cook & LaMay, 135). An anonymous letter written at Milan in 1611 claims that Basile was paid 2000 scudi per year (ten times the amount paid to Monteverdi); she also received many expensive presents (jewels, clothing, furnishings) by both the duchess and Duke Vincenzo, including the baronial title and fief of Piancerreto (in Monferrato) conferred on her husband and herself in 1612. In addition, the Duke awarded dowries to her two sisters, Margherita and Vittoria, and two of her brothers were made gentlemen of the court. Basile was equally successful under Duke Vincenzo's successors, Francesco and Ferdinando.

Compositional activity by Adriana and her sisters Vittoria and Margherita is attested to by various contemporary accounts; in 1616 Basile may have written her own part for a Mantuan entertainment; in 1618 she travelled in Duke Ferdinando's retinue to perform in Florence and Rome; and in 1620 she sent a canzonetta to Isabella of Savoy. Monteverdi's letters attest to her musical excellence and describe her solo and ensemble performances. In 1623 Basile travelled to Venice with the Duke and Duchess of Mantua for a celebration in their honor; there she was presented with a collection of poetry, *Il teatro delle glorie*. In 1624 she returned from the Mantuan court to her native Naples, where she lived until 1633 when she moved to Rome along with her daughter, Leonora Baroni, also a singer and composer who undertook a solo tour in 1627; Basile performed with her daughters in an ensemble under the patronage of the Rospigliosi family in Rome. She gave up singing in 1637, when she was around 60 years old.

Margherita Basile (fl. 1610-20)

The sister of Adriana and Vittoria, Margherita Basile was brought to the Mantuan court from Rome c.1610, where she sang along with her sisters. Along with being an excellent vocalist, Margherita was a proficient improviser and composer, as attested by Alessandro Striggio.

Vittoria Basile (fl. 1610)

The sister of Adriana and Margherita, Vittoria also worked and sang at the court of Mantua from c.1610, and is mentioned as singer, improvisor and composer in the letters of Alessandro Striggio and Claudio Monteverdi.

Francheschina Bellamano (fl. 1540s)

Bellamano was one of several ladies who gained fame as a singer and lûtenist in the academies and salons of Venice. She is listed among Italy's renowned "Donne a liuto et a libro" by the music theorist Pietro Aaron in his 1545 *Lucidario in musica,* and praised by Dionigi Atanagi as "a virtuous lady, who sings and plays the lute most excellently" ("*una virtuosa donna, che cantava, & sonava eccellentemente di liuto, detta Franceschina Bellamano,*" in Feldman 1995, 104). Venier's sonnet *Ne 'l bianco augel, che 'n grembo a Leda giacque* praises Bellamano's performance of a lute song, with a delightful pun on her surname, *bella mano*, the lovely hand:

> With various words, now this, now that string
> Does the lovely hand touch on the hollow wood,
> Miraculously tuning her song to its sound.
> (Venier, Sonnet no. 68, vv. 9-11; in Feldman 1995, 103)

Vittoria Bentivoglio (fl. 1570s)

The daughter of the noble Cybo family, Vittoria married into the equally noble Bentivogilo family. She joined the Ferrarese court between 1574 and 1577 (according to Newcomb's speculation) presumably as a lady-in-waiting to Duchess Lucretia of Urbino, where she sang with the first *concerte delle donne* under the patronage of Duke Alfonso and his sister Duchess Lucretia. In 1577 Vittoria's name is first mentioned in a letter of Canigiani which describes an evening of music-making in the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino, where he heard "Signor Giulio Cesare Brancaccio sing in the company of —that is together with— [*in compagnia sive concerto*] Signora Lucrezia Bendidio, Contessa Leonora di Scandiano and Signora Vittoria Bentivoglio" (Canigiani, letter of December 14, 1577; in Newcomb 1970, 18). She remained in Lucretia's service even when her position as a favourite singer was usurped by Laura Peverara.

Lucrezia Bendidio, (b.1546-c.1590s)

Born into a wealthy Ferrarese noble family, Lucrezia first entered the service of Leonora d'Este, in whose entourage she travelled to Padua in September 1561, along with the household of Cardinal Luigi d'Este with whom she had an affair. She attracted the poetic attentions of Torquato Tasso, (at the time a young student) and later of minister and poet G. B. Pigna. In the summer of 1562 Lucrezia married Count Paolo Machiavelli (becoming the aunt, by marriage, to her brother-in-law G.B. Guarini), and she may have moved to Ferrara at this time. From 1571 she resided at the Ferrarese court where she was a member of Lucretia d'Este's household (Leonora d'Este having died several years earlier), and a favourite singer in the first *concerto delle donne*. Her participation in the *musica secreta* concerts subsided with the Duke's third marriage to Margherita Gonzaga and the formation of a new, younger, female *concerto*.

Isabella Bendidio (c. late1540s-1590s)

A sister to Lucrezia and Taddea, Isabella has been cited as "the most able of the amateur singers at the Ferrarese court in the 1570s," where she performed with the first *concerto delle donne* (Newcomb 1975, 99). Isabella married Cornelio Bentivoglio, who commissioned the poem 'Donna, se ben le chiome' from Tasso for her; the poem was subsequently set by Giaches Wert in his 7 bk à

5, 1581. Isabella's sister Taddea was married to the Ferrarese court secretary and poet G.B. Guarini.

Orsola Benincasa (fl. 1599)

Benincasa was the founder and member of the Neapolitan convent of S. Martino, where she also founded a famed singing group made up of convent members. Her skill as a singer and musical trainer is mentioned in Giovenale Ancina's dedication to *Tempio Armonico* (1599).

Laura Birago (fl. 1500)

This little-known female singer is cited by Colin Slim as a possible identification for the famed singer Lauretta listed in Oriolo's *Musicians on Parnassus* (c.1520).

Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519)

The daughter of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia (later to become Pope Alexander VI) and his long time mistress Vannozza Cattanei of Mantua (d. 1518), Lucrezia grew up amidst the power, decadence and intrigue of the Borgia papacy. Residing in the Palazzo Santa Maria in Portico that housed the female court of Alexander VI, Lucrezia's education was overseen by the Pope's niece, Adriana Mila and his mistress Giulia Farnese. She acquired a deep love for poetry, especially Petrarch, whose *canzoniere* she owned, and knew enough Latin to be considered an eloquent orator. She inherited a passion for music from her father, and her musical tastes may have been influenced by the compositions of Josquin de Pres who was in the Pope's service until 1494. After two failed marriages (the first annulled in 1497 on grounds of non-consummation, the second ending in the death of her husband Duke Alfonso d'Aragona of Bisceglie), an internship as Governor of Spoleto and Foligno (1499) and governor of the Vatican in her father's absence (1500), and an affair with the Pope's secretary Pedro "Perrotto" Caldes which resulted in the birth of a son, Lucrezia married Alfonso I d'Este and later became Duchess of Ferrara. With a percentage of the spectacular dowry of 100,000 ducats (plus the castles of Cento and Pieve unlawfully detached from the diocese of Bologna, and another fortune in jewels, clothes, silverware, carpets, brocades, tapestries and other precious objects as well as several Papal dispensations) grudgingly doled out by her father-in-law, Lucrezia established a court at Ferrara which attracted poets, musicians and artists from across northern Italy.

Lucrezia employed both men and women singers (including Dalida de' Puti and the singer-courtiers of her entourage) and a dancing master on regular basis, and in 1508 she spent 998 lire (5.4% of her annual revenue of 6000 ducats or 18,600 lire per year) on singers, string players, a pipe & tabour player and dancing master. She also occasionally employed or borrowed from her husband or brother-in-law Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, trumpeters, *piffari* and bagpipe players for Carnival or other festivals. She was a leading patron of the *frottola*, employing Tromboncino, Niccolo da Padova and Dionisio da Mantova, and requesting many setting of Petrarch, but also favoured Spanish music and musicians. Tromboncino's works with Spanish texts, including *Muchos son che van perdidos* (publ. 1519), were most likely written for the Spanish-speaking Lucrezia. In 1519 Lucrezia died after fever and complications due to the birth of her seventh child.

Laura Bovia (fl. 1580s)

Laura Bovia was the niece (possibly an illegitimate daughter) of Monsignore Giacomo Bovia, a highly placed church official in Bologna and trusted servant of the Medici family. She was educated by the nuns of San Lorenzo, as well as by private musicians from outside the convent and was renowned in Bologna for her beautiful voice. At a young age she was invited to the Gonzaga court in Mantua by Duke Guglielmo to be a "suitable companion" to his new daughter-in-law, Margherita Farnese; it is possible that she may have been asked to sing in a *concerto delle donne* at this time, but Fenlon notes that "there is nothing to suggest that Guglielmo intended to employ Laura Bovia as a member of a *musica secreta* on the Ferrarese model" (1980, 134). Negotiations for her employment ceased because of rumors which cast suspicions on Laura's virtue (citing her close relations with too many musicians), but the process was started again in 1581, when Guglielmo received reliable reports dispelling the rumors, from the canons of San Giovanni in Monte who oversaw the convent of San Lorenzo. Laura finally came to Mantua briefly in late 1581, but she was back in Bologna by 1582.

Beginning in 1584, Laura entered the service of the Grand Duchess of Florence and for several years sang with a *concerto delle donne* at the Florentine court along with Lucia Caccini, Vittoria Archilei and director Giulio Caccini. The Florentine *concerto* flourished until Grand Duke Francesco's and Grand Duchess Bianca's deaths in 1587. In 1589 Bovia was dismissed from the court in a drastic reduction of the musical ensemble by the new Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici in Florence; apparently, as an unmarried female singer she was not considered a suitable *damigelle* for the new Grand Duchess Christine de Lorraine, and was told by Ferdinando that she must either marry, enter a convent, or return home— she chose the latter. In 1592 Bovia married Giacomo Basenghi and the couple resided principally in Parma; Claudio Merulo's *Canzoni d'intavolatura d'organo* of 1592 contains nine pieces each addressed to a Parmesan lady, beginning with a 'Cazon a 4 dita La Bovia.' Bovia is acclaimed "most skilled in composing" by Camillo Cortellini in the dedication of his *Primo libro de' madrigali a cinque voci,* 1583 (in Bowers, 1987, 120-21), and is lauded in the poem *La gloria delle donne* by Giulio Cesare della Croce of Bologna along with other female singers and poets.

Francesca Caccini (c.1587-c.1640)

The daughter of Giulio and Lucia Caccini, Francesca's birth has been recorded as September 18, 1587 (this date is contested by Newcomb who argues for after 1589, because of an odd dispatch of 1587 from the Ferrarese Ambassador Cortile which states that Giulio "neither has children nor is burdened by family"). Francesca Caccini grew up at the Medici court in Florence where she was trained by her father in singing, composition, harpsichord, lute and "chitarineta" at an early age, both privately and at his court school. She also received a literary education. Francesca made her debut as a singer in 1600 at age 13 in the premiere of the first opera, *Euridice*, by Jacopo Peri, with some numbers by Giulio Caccini. She continued to perform at the Florentine court from 1600 on, and was a member, along with her mother, stepmother and sisters, of the Florentine *concerto delle donne* under her father's direction (the group was sometimes known as "Le donne di Giulio Romano"). In the winter of 1604-05 she sang for the king and queen of France and received her first independent job offer from Marie de' Medici of France as a salaried court singer with a dowry of 1000 scudi. The offer was never accepted due to Grand Duke Ferdinand I of Florence' refusal to release Caccini's daughter from his service. She spent the summer of 1605 at Modena, where she taught Princess Giulia d'Este. In 1606 negotiations were begun between her father and Prince Peretti for a position with Princess Margherita della Somaglia-Peretti (sister-in-law of Cardinal Montalto and Virginio Orsini in Rome); the offer included a salary and dowry, but again was turned down.

In 1607 Francesca officially entered the service of the Florentine court, and on November 15 of that year she married Giovanni Battista Signorini Malaspina, a Florentine court singer. With her dowry of 1000 scudi provided by the Grand Duke, Caccini and Malaspina bought two adjoining houses in the via Valfonda near S Maria Novella, where they lived until his death in 1626. Her duties at the Florentine court included teaching —she instructed princesses, ladies-in-waiting and at least one nun in singing — directing a female music ensemble described in court diaries as "la sig[nor]a Francesca e le sue figliuole" (Francesca Caccini and her pupils), singing regularly in private court entertainments, theatrical works, and Holy Week services, and composition.

An active composer by age 18, Francesca, set several *canzonetta* texts of Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger, with whom she corresponded; she composed music for a dramatic *invenzioni* in 1608, and wrote nine dramatic works (whole or contributed to), including her complete opera *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* (1628), one book of madrigals, and other vocal works (many others unrecorded). Her *Primo Libro* of 1618 represents the most extensive collection of early monodic music by a single composer up to that time. By 1623 Francesca had become the most highly paid musician at court, earning 240 scudi per year (more than anyone else except the Duke's secretary). In 1627 she married Lucchese aristocrat and patron Tomaso Raffaelli. She had two children, Margherita (b. 1622; she became a singer and a nun), and Tomaso (b. 1628).

Lucia Caccini (fl. 1570- c.1600)

Lucia Caccini was the first wife of Giulio Caccini, and mother of Francesca, Settimia and Pompeo. She was a singer (possibly studying under Giulio) and member of the first Florentine *concerto delle donne* which flourished under Giulio's direction from 1584-1587. She may also have helped teach girls (including her daughters) in Giulio's court music school. She received her own salary as a musician under Grand Duke Francesco de' Medici (mentioned in letters of 1584, and 1588) but her salary (though not her singing duties) was cut by the new Grand Duke Ferdinando in 1587. In 1590 she sang and danced in the *Maschere di Bergiere* in Florence. She may possibly have performed as a member of the Caccini family consort at the French court in 1604-05; this fact is affirmed by Cook & LaMay (1984), but contested by Cusick (1995) who believes that the Madame Caccini in this instance was Giulio's second wife, Margherita della Scala.

Settimia Caccini (1591-c.1638 Cook & LaMay; after 1661[Sadie & Samuel])

The second daughter of Lucia and Giulio Caccini, Settimia made her singing debut at age 9 in the 1600 premiere of her father's opera *Il rapimento di Cefalo*. She also sang in the 1602 setting of Ottavio Rinuccini's *Euridice*. Nicknamed *La Flora*, Settimia toured Paris in 1604-1605 with the Caccini family consort. Her career at the Florentine Medici court was organized by her father in the first years of the seventeenth century, where she sang mostly with the Caccini consort and in the Florentine *concerto delle donne* under Giulio's direction. In 1608 the offer of a singing position at the Mantuan court (the terms included finding her a husband) was declined when the Medici refused to release her from Florence. A similar offer from Enzo Bentivoglio in Rome was also refused. In 1608 Settimia sang the role of Venus in the first production of Monteverdi's *Arianna*; according to Cook & LaMay this was Settimia's first independently paid role (1984, 141). In 1609 she married singer and composer Alessandro Ghivizzani, receiving a dowry of 600 scudi from the Medici family and becoming (along with her husband) a salaried musician at the court. A few years later Caccini and Ghivizzani left Florence and in 1613 they were recruited by Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga in Lucca to sing at the court in Mantua where they stayed until 1622 when they first returned to Lucca and finally settled in Parma in the service of Cardinal Farnese. In 1628 Settimia sang the role of Aurora in Montervdi's *torneo, Mercurio e Marte* for the wedding festivities of Odoardo Farnese and Margherita de' Medici; she was especially praised for this performance which inaugurated the Teatro Farnese at Parma. After the death of her husband in 1632 she returned to Florence. The name Settimia Ghivizzani remains on the court payroll until 1661, but "it is generally assumed that Settimia died around 1638 and that the references are to a daughter" (Cook & LaMay 142). Seven compositions —songs with basso continuo— are preserved in two manuscripts, along with works by her husband (in Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Q49, and Prague, Národní Muzeum, Hudebni Oddělení, II La 2).

Maria di Cardona (fl. 1570s)

Maria di Cardona, Marchesa della Padula, was a singer, poetess and music patron of some renown. She held a literary salon in Naples and had some ties to Vittoria Colonna.

Maddalena Casulana (c.1544-after 1583)

Born in Casole d'Elsa, near Siena around 1540, Maddalena Casulana was an active singer, composer, instrumentalist and music teacher in Venetian musical circles by 1566, and also established lasting ties to the musical culture of Vicenza (she is later described as 'Vicentina'). Surviving dedications between 1568-1570 attest to Casulana's popularity and accomplishment. She published madrigals in two Venetian anthologies assembled by Giulio Bonagionta of 1566 and 1567. Her setting of the epithalamium *Nil mage iucundum* in five parts was used by Lasso for the royal wedding of Archduke Wilhelm of Bavaria in 1568. Two collections of her four-voiced madrigals were published in 1568 and 1570; Casulana dedicated the *Primo libro de madrigali a quattro voci* of 1568 to Isabella de' Medici Orsina, "not only to give witness to my devotion to Your Excellency, but also to show to the world (to the degree that it is granted to me in this profession of music) the foolish error of men, who so greatly believe themselves to be the masters of high intellectual gifts that [these gifts] cannot, it seems to them, be equally common among women" (in Sadie & Samuel 1994, 110). The *Secondo libro* of 1570 is dedicated to Don Antonio Londonio, highly placed official in Milan whose wife, Isabella, was a noted singer.

In 1569 the Vicentine poet Giambattista Maganza published a *canzone* in dialect dedicated to Signora Madalena Casulana Vicentina. Her main sponsor, Antonio Molino, a successful Venetian merchant and founder of a notable musical academy in his home, attributed his interest and knowledge in madrigal composition to Casulana "whose ability is such that it would kindle in the hoariest intelligence a new desire for glory" (in Newcomb 1975, 106); Molino was over seventy when he published his first book of madrigals in 1568, dedicated to Casulana. Casulana may have married sometime after 1570, for her later publication (a 1583 book of madrigals *a cinque voci*, dedicated to Mario Bevilacqua of Verona) is under new name, *Madalena Mazari detta Casulana Vicentina.* She may have moved to Milan at this time, though nothing is heard about her between 1570 and 1582 when she sang at a banquet in Perugia, "La Casolana famosa . . . canto al liuto di muisca divinamente" (in Sadie & Samuel 1994, 110). A dedication to her exists as late as 1582, by Gardano who, in Monte's first book of 3-voiced madrigals, refers to Madalena Casulana as "the Muse and Siren of our age." Her last recorded performance is in January 1583, when Casulana performed at a meeting of the *Accademia Olimpica* in Vicenza which at one time owned a portrait of her.

Claudia Cattaneo (c.1580 - 1607)

The daughter of a member of the Mantuan *cappella di musica*, Claudia Cattaneo was a singer at the Mantuan court from at least 1591, although she is not mentioned as a singer in the Mantuan *concerto della donne.* She married Claudio Monteverdi in 1599, and may have been a voice teacher in his studio, teaching among her pupils, the young virtuosa Caterina Martinelli, who lived with the Monteverdi household from 1603-1608.

Vittoria Colonna (1490-1547)

A premier Petrarchan poet, musician and patron, Colonna's poems survive in 54 manuscript copies and some 340 known printed volumes of collected works from across Italy. Colonna was a connoisseur of music and as a female poet may have sung her own works, performing in literary salons and academies in improvised genres. She has ties to Maria Cardona and the literary artistic circles in Naples. A friend of Castiglione and Michelangelo, she is mentioned in the introduction to Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* as transcribing without permission an early copy of his book which he had given her. Vittoria was revered in her lifetime as the premier lady of the Renaissance, and praised by contemporary writers: Ortensio Lando classes her with Cecilia Gallerani and Isabella d'Este as among the most cultured women of the age. When visiting the Ferrarese court during the reign of Ercole II and Renée de France, Colonna received a public ovation upon her arrival.

Beatrice d'Este (1475-1497)

The second daughter of Ercole I d'Este and Eleanora d'Aragona, Duke and Duchess of Ferrara, Beatrice was raised at her grandfather's court of Naples from the age of 2 to 10 years (1477-85). Her education included music, and upon her return to Ferrara she continued her musical and humanist education (which included Latin, Greek, Italian, and a reading knowledge of French, Provençal and Spanish) along with her sister Isabella and half-sister Lucrezia. The Este girls took dancing lessons from famed master Lorenzo Lavagnolo and music lessons from Johannes Martini. After a long and delayed engagement, Beatrice married Ludovico Sforza *Il Moro* of Milan in 1491, becoming Duchess of Bari upon her marriage, and later Duchess of Milan (1494). Her first son, Ercole (later called Maximilian) was born in January 1493. Beatrice was passionately fond of music, and several letters and court chronicles record her singing, playing the clavichord, listening to ladies and courtier-musicians and commissioning songs and fine instruments. Like her father, she never travelled without her favourite singers, even when "she travelled *incognito* and took only a few persons in her suite" (Cartwright 1928, 111). Of the many illustrious poets, artists, scholars and courtiers who frequented her brilliant cultural court, Niccolo da Corregio wrote sonnets and *canzoni* for her to sing, the favourite dwarf entertainer Diodato of Ferrara sang and danced for her amusement along with her ladies-in-waiting Polissena d'Este and Teodora degli Angeli, Serafino Aquilano composed and performed verses to lute accompaniment in her honour, and Cristoforo Romano "laid down the sculptor's chisel to play the lyre or viol for her pleasure" (in Cartwright 1928, 76). Violist Jacopo di San Secondo, singer Angelo Giovanni Testagrossa, the Flemish tenor Johannes Corider and Atalante, viol player and revered instrument maker, were among the elite musicians of Beatrice's Milanese court. Duchess Beatrice's musical patronage differs from the standard female support of secular vocal and string music for the private court, in that she involved herself in the affairs of the court *cappella* as well, even taking them with her on diplomatic journeys.

Isabella d'Este (1474-1539)

The eldest daughter of Duke Ercole I d'Este and Duchess Eleanora d'Aragona of Ferrara, Isabella was given an extensive education in the humanities and music. As a girl, she studied singing, lute, keyboards and music theory, and she took her Flemish music master, Johannes Martini, with her when she moved from Ferrara to Mantua as a young bride in 1490. She studied further with singer Charles de Lannoy, keyboardist and violist Girolamo Sestola and singer-lutenist Giovanni Angelo Testagrossa. Isabella quickly became a virtuoso of voice, keyboards, lute, viol and *lira da braccio*. She performed (music and dancing), as befitted a lady of the ruling class, only in private, or at special functions and for important guests (such as the French ambassador, Pietro Bembo, and the Marchese of Bitonto), and her singing was praised by leading poets Pietro Bembo, Niccolo da Correggio, Girolamo Casio and Antonio Tebaldeo. Isabella was also a prodigious patron of the arts and an avid collector of art and antiquities. At her court in Mantua she engaged composers Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Marchetto Cara and maintained a chamber ensemble of singers, lutenists, viol players, as well as players of the *lira da braccio* and keyboard instruments. Above all, Isabella d'Este was a patron of the *frottola*, commissioning poetry to be set to music from nearly every major poet across Italy, and dictating, through her taste for serious Italian verse, the development of this new secular vocal genre. She even dabbled in composition herself: in 1494 Antonio Tebaldeo wrote to her, saying, "I have seen the strambotto composed by Your Ladyship on the plants stripped of their foliage, and I like it very much" (in Riley 1986, 475). Isabella d'Este was a strong political negotiator, an experienced diplomat, a shrewd business manager, a connoisseur of art, music and literature and a mother of six children.

Lucretia d'Este, (1535-1598)

Daughter of Ercole II d'Este and Renée of France, and sister to Duke Alfonso II, Lucretia d'Este married Francesco Maria della Rovere in 1570, becoming the Duchess of Urbino. Their marriage was not successful, however, and by 1576 Lucretia was estranged from her husband and living in Ferrara. She was integral in encouraging the first Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*, which was comprised of ladies of her household. Later, she hosted the new female *concerto* made up of women in the service of her rival, the young Duchess of Ferrara, Margherita Gonzaga. By 1589, however, Lucretia had established an alternate female chamber ensemble, which included the Avogadri sisters and a woman who played the viola bastarda. The ensemble is described by Caccini in a letter of October 1592 to the Grand Duke of Florence as "the Duchess of Urbino's *musica delle quattro Dame che cantano, e suonano*" (in Newcomb 1970, 200). Lucretia is the dedicatee of "Di cerchio in cerchio" in Giaches Wert's *Il quarto libro de madrigali a cinque voci* of 1567.

Marietta Faliera (fl. 1500)

Faliera is cited as a lady singer by Ponzio, and listed in Oriolo's *Musicians on Parnassus* (c.1520).

Veronica Franco (b. 1546-after 1580)

A Venetian courtesan and poet, Veronica Franco was renowned for her many artistic accomplishments including singing and playing the lute and the harpsichord. She likely performed in Venetian academies and *ridotti* as well as in her own salon, and was a frequent guest of Domenico Venier's literary group. Franco published a book of letters in 1580.

Polissena Frigera (or Frizera) (fl. 1550s)

AVenetian lady renowned for singing and playing the lute, Polissena Frigera frequented Venetian *ridotti* and academies, including Domenico Venier's literary salon (in Feldman 1995, 104). She is listed in Ortensio Landi's *Sette libri de cathaloghi* (1552) along with Polissena Pecorina and Franceschina Bellamano as one of the three most noted female musicians of the modern era. There is some speculation that Frigera was also a courtesan, though this has not been substantiated.

Renée de France (1510-1575)

Daughter of Anne of Brittany and King Louis XII of France, Renée was raised by Louise of Savoy (whose son became Francis I). In 1528, she married Ercole II of Ferrara; their wedding was celebrated in the new palace of Belvedere which Alfonso had built on an island in the Po. Clément Marot wrote a nuptial hymn in her honour, and spoke in his writings of "*ce noble coeur de Renée de France.*" Described as short, awkward, slightly deformed and of delicate health, Renée declined to learn Italian and remained insular throughout her reign as Duchess of Ferrara (her Secretary Bernardo Tasso was the only Italian in her employ). Yet her love of learning attracted foremost scholars, and French and sacred music figured in the informal academy which she held in her rooms; through this salon, Vittoria Colonna became her good friend, as well as the Dominican friar, Bernardino Ochino. Deeply religious, Renée supported charitable institutions and sheltered heretics. She became a protestant during a visit from Calvin in 1536, and was imprisoned by her husband who was the Pope's representative in Ferrara. Renée is the addressee of "Donna de la real stirpe" in Giaches Wert's *Il quarto libro de madrigali a cinque voci* of 1567. Her musical taste is seen in a banquet given on 24 January, 1529, in which some of her musicians participated: "each course was heralded by a troop of musicians, playing the flute, viol, cornet, lyre, and harp, and singing madrigals and rondeaux under the direction of Alfonso di Viola, the conductor of the orchestra of the Duomo, while sweet organ melodies were heard in the distance" (Cartwright 1903, 292).

Giulia Francesco (fl. mid-fifteenth century)

The daughter of Giovanni Francesco, Giulia is mentioned in a book on Girolamo Parabosco by Giuseppe Bianchini (Venice, 1899) and cited in Enrico Paganuzzi, "Il cinquecento" in *La Musica à Verona* (1976). She was known as a *virtuosa di sonar, di parlar, e di scriver* (a person skilled in playing, speaking and writing). Interestingly, information about Giulia's musical career is known from court proceedings instituted against her by her husband for alleged infidelity: the testimony given "disclosed that Giulia taught harpsichord to the daughters and sons of rich families, that she received a certain young man repeatedly for lessons, that they sang together, and that she played for his friends" (Newcomb 1975, 105).

Cecilia Gallerani (c.1460-65 - c.1550s)

Suggested as the sitter for Bartolommeo Veneto's famous painting *The Lute Player* (Valeri 1929, 473), the highly cultivated Gallerani was the long-time mistress of Ludovico Sforza, *Il Moro* (from 1481). In May 1491, she married Count Lodovico Bergamini of Cremono (one of Duke Ludovico Gonzaga's most loyal servants), and the same year bore a son to *Il Moro*. Duke Ludovico presented Gallerani with the Palazzo del Verme in Milan (described as the finest private house in Milan) as an inheritance for her infant son. Here, as well as at her villa near Cremona, she gathered court of distinguished philosophers, artists and musicians. Gallerani was renowned for her learning and culture; she was fluent in Latin and composed sonnets in Italian. She is praised by contemporary writers (Scaligero, Ortensio Lando, Matteo Bandello) as "la bella Gallerani," the Sappho of modern times, and classed with Vittoria Colonna and Isabella d'Este as among the most cultured women of the age. Remarkable for a woman in the Renaissance, Gallerani died of old age.

Veronica Gambara (1485-1550)

Daughter of Count Gianfrancesco da Gambara and Alda Pia (sister of Emilia Pia), Gambara was one of the most famed female poets of the *cinquecento*. As a poet, Gambara worked within the tradition of Petrarchan love poetry along with Gaspara Stampa and Vittoria Colonna, influenced by Pietro Bembo, the "reigning literary figure and leader of a resurgence of Petrarchism" (Poss 1987, 49). She was also a singer, music patron and at one time the administrator of the town of Correggio.

Elisabetta Gonzaga (1471-1526)

Daughter of Duke Federico Gonzaga of Mantua and Margaret of Bavaria (sister to Francesco, Chiara and Maddalena Gonzaga), Elisabetta was educated by the renowned commentator on Dante, Colombino of Verona. In 1488 she married Guidobaldo di Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. Elisabetta is most widely known as the idealized duchess of Castiglione's *Il libro di cortegiano.* She delighted in music and singing, and presided over a court of intellectuals and literary figures. Suffering from delicate health, the Duchess of Urbino often spent the summers in Mantua with her sister-in-law Isabella d'Este, for whom she had great affection. A letter of September 4, 1503 from Lorenzo da Pavia to Isabella, describes Marchetto and Giovanna Cara performing for Elisabetta in Venice. (In Prizer, 1980 doc. 16); Elisabetta's own musical skill is lauded in a poem, *De Elisabella Gonzaga Canente* by Castiglione.

Leonora Gonzaga (1493-1550)

The eldest daughter of Isabella d'Este, Leonora received an extensive musical education including singing, lute, viol, and harpsichord lessons. In 1509, she married Francesca Maria Della Rovere, becoming the Duchess of Urbino. Leonora continued to perform and patronize the secular vocal music of her time, taking particular delight in the singing of Marchetto and Giovanna Cara and the instruments of Lorenzo da Pavia. In a letter of 1523, Marchetta Cara calls her "my most illustrious and excellent Lady and most worthy Patroness" and talks about the "beautiful viola made by Maestro Lorenzo da Pavia" originally made for her younger brother Ferrante, but being given to Leonora since "it would delight your Ladyship much more that it does Ferrante"; Cara begs her to "accept it from whomever you please or appears to you best, either from your mother or from your dear younger brother Ferrante. Each of them wants to please your Ladyship and give you the said viola" (in Prizer 1980, 46).

Margherita Gonzaga d'Este (1564-1618)

The daughter of Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga and Eleanora of Austria, Margherita Barbara was baptized on May 17, 1565. She married Duke Alfonso II d'Este of Ferrara on February 27, 1579 (he was aged 45 and she just 15). Shortly after her arrival at Ferrara, she established, directed and took part in the regular concerts of the *balletto della duchessa*, which performed with elaborate costumes and complex choreography, and consisted of various ladies of both her household and that of her sister-in-law Duchess Lucretia d'Este of Urbino. The formation of the prestigious second *concerto delle donne* may have been instigated by Margherita Gonzaga; at the least, her youth and love of music, dancing and entertainment inspired Alfonso d'Este to engage four female singers as *damigelle* in her household. Margherita was keenly interested in music, dancing and the theatre, and her influence on the social activities of the Este court seem to have been considerable.

Anna Guarini (before 1570-1598)

One of seven children born to the poet and Ferrarese court secretary Giovanni Battista Guarini, and Taddea Bendidio Guarini, Anna was taught music as part of her court education. She could sing and play the lute and in 1580 she joined the service of Duchess Margherita Gonzaga of Ferrara, becoming a principle member of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*. Soon after, she married Ercole Trotti, a gentleman of the court. In 1598 Anne Guarini was murdered by her husband under accusations of adultery.

Lavinia Guasco (b. c.1576)

Lavinia Guasco's musical inclinations are known through a private conduct book written for her by her father Regionamento Guasco, when she left home in 1586 to join the ladies-in-waiting to Duchess of Savoy. In it she is advised to continue her pursuit of music (singing, viola da gamba and clavichord) and other studies (especially writing and rhetoric) and to perform in the company of other ladies who could "vie with her in this and other accomplishments." In this way, Regionamento hoped his daughter might distinguish herself, even becoming the Duchess' secretary one day.

Eufemia Joloza (fl. 1558-65)

Eufemia Joloza was a renowned soprano whose singing garnered praise throughout Italy. She is listed in the index of Dionigi Aganagi's *De le rime di diversi nobili poeti toscani, libro primo* (Venice 1565) as "Madonna Eufemia Joloza, *gentildonna napoletana*," and is the dedicatee of Antonio Allegretti's *Fumia la pastorella*, a poem set to music by Monteverdi and others. She performed along with professionals Giovanni Leonardo dall'Arpa and Scipione delle Palle (Giulio Caccini's teacher). One of her most well known performances took place during a comedy by Alessandro Piccolomini performed in Naples in 1558. In an *intermedio* called *La nave di Cleopatra*, Cleopatra's boat was hauled on stage, and Eufemia stood up and delivered a series of stanzas, "in a manner midway between singing and reciting. . . . The sweetness and novelty of the singing transported everyone to Paradise. . . . The queen Cleopatra was Phomia, whose singing cannot be compared to terrestrial matters, but to the heavenly harmonies"(in Newcomb 1975, 112).

Isabella Londonio (fl. 1570s)

A noted singer in Milan, Isabella Londonio was married to Don Antonio Londonio, a highly placed Milanese official. Madalena Casulana's *Secondo Libro de mardrigali a quattro voci* dedicated to Don Antonio and his virtuosic wife.

Laura Lucchesina de' Guidiccioni (b. October 1550 - fl. 1590s)

Poetess, dancer and singer, Laura Lucchesina is described in a dispatch of August 13, 1588, of the Ferrarese ambassador at Florence, Cortile: "Il Lucchesino, too, has entered the rolls, with a monthly provision of 40 scudi. He has brought along his wife, who, although she is getting on in age, is very beautiful and sings very well—something that rather pleases the Grand Duke [Ferdinando]" (in Newcomb 1980, 92). She is lauded as a poet in *La gloria delle donne* by Giulio Cesare della Croce (1590), and is known to have adapted the text of *Il pastor fido* for Cavalieri's ballet *pastorella Il gioco della cieca*, performed before Cardinal Montalto on October 29, 1595 in the Hall of Statues in the Palazzo Pitti and repeated there on January 5, 1599. She is listed in Malvezzi's *Nono parte*, p. 19, at the heading to Cavalieri's *Ballo del Granduca* , "La Musica de questo ballo, & il ballo stesso fù del Sig. Laura Lucchesini de' Guidiccioni gentildonna principalissima della città di Lucca ornata di rarissime qualità e virtù" (in Fenlon 1980, 160).

Marchese di Malaspina (fl. 1568)

An artistically-inclined noblewoman, the Marchese di Malaspina performed the role of Courtesan Camilla in an impromptu performance of *Commedia dell'arte* (described as "an Italian comedy all'improvviso") conceived by Orlando di Lasso, and played in honour of William IV and Renee of Lorraine in Trausnitz, Bavaria. The event is described by Massimo Troiano, court musician, in *Discourses on the triumphs, tournaments, ceremonies and most notable events at the sumptuous nuptials of the Most illustrious . . . duke William . . in the year 1568 on the 22nd day of February.*

Caterina Martinelli (1589-1608)

Caterina Martinelli was born in Rome to a family of modest background. Her fine singing quickly brought her fame, and she was nicknamed La Romanina. In 1603 negotiations began between Martinelli's father and Duke Vincenzo I of Mantua for her employment at the Mantuan court. When the Duke required Caterina to undergo a medical examination to determine her virginity before she was accepted at court, the test was vigorously protested by her father as a slight to his daughter's honour. Martinelli had originally intended to study with Caccini in Florence, but instead she went directly to Mantua to live and study with Claudio Monteverdi and his wife Claudia Catteneo. At Mantua, Martinelli sang in the court's regular Friday concerts, directed by Monteverdi. In 1608 she sang the role of Venus in Marco da Gagliano's *Le Dafne*. Martinelli was originally meant to sing the title role in Monteverdi's *L'Arianna* in 1608, but died of smallpox on March 7, shortly before the work's premiere (Duchess Eleonoro attributed her death to loose living and heavy drinking, especially during Carnival season). The inscription upon her tomb reads "Look, read and weep! Caterina Martinelli of Rome, who by the tunefulness and flexibility of her voice easily excelled the songs of the Sirens and the melody of the heavenly spheres, dear above all to Vincenzo, Serene Duke of Mantua, for that famous excellence, the sweetness of her manner, her beauty, her grace and charm, snatched away, alas, by bitter death, rests for eternity in this tomb, commanded by a most generous prince who still grieves at this sudden blow. Let her name live in the world, and her soul with God. She died in the eighteenth year of her youth, the ninth of March, 1608" (in Strainchamps 1985, 170). A *sestina* in homage to the young singer by the Mantuan courtier Scipione Agnelli, *Lagrime d'amanti al sepulcro dell'amata,* was set by Monteverdi at Duke Vincenzo's request, and published as a cycle of six five-part unaccompanied madrigals in his sixth book of madrigals (Venice, 1614).

Paola Massarenghi of Parma (b.1565- fl. 1580s)

The daughter of bourgeios parents, composer Paola Massarenghi was likely a performer, if only in private circles. Her known musical contribution consists of a single extant composition: *Quando spiega l'insegn'al sommo padre,* published in F. Arcangelo Gherardini, *Il primo libro de' madrigali à cinque voci* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1585).

Leonora de' Medici (fl. late 1500s)

Leonora de' Medici married Vincenzo Gonzaga in 1584, becoming Duchess of Mantua in 1587. She is recorded as "an admirer of dancing and music, particularly the lighter styles" (Fenlon 1980, 124), and aided her husband in his enthusiastic patronage of female singers at the court of Mantua. Giaches Wert dedicated a book of *canzonette villanelle* to her in 1589. Fenlon suggests that "the noticeable enthusiasm for the *canzonetta* style in the years after Vincenzo's accession may well reflect her influence" (Fenlon 1980, 124).

Giovanna Moreschi (fl. early 1500s- d. c.1509)

Giovanna Moreschi was a singer at the court of Mantua, and wife of singer, lutenist and composer Marchetto Cara, whom she had married by 1501 (Cara renounced his clerical status in 1497). Her singing was much beloved by the Marchesa Isabella d'Este, her family and friends, notably Elisabetta Gonzaga of Urbino, and Isabella's daughter Leonora Gonzaga (also Duchess of Urbino). A letter of September 4, 1503, from Lorenzo da Pavia to Isabella, describes Moreschi and Cara singing together: "Marchetto and Giovanna have arrived, and truly, her Excellency the duchess takes the greatest pleasure in them; they sing so beautifully that blessed are they who hear them; the Venetians conclude that they have never heard better" (in Prizer 1980, 43). Giovanna made her will on May 4, 1509, and presumably died shortly thereafter (Cara was remarried by 1512).

Tarquinia Molza (1542-1617)

Born to an important noble family in Modena, Tarquinia Molza was the daughter of Cavalier Camillo, and niece of the poet Francesco Maria Molza. Tarquinia's education included music performance and composition. Her father and teacher both died when she was 13, at which time her mother made her give up learning and music for the next five years. In 1560 she married Paolo Porrina and in 1565 she began studying again with the approval of her husband (he died in 1569). From the early 1570s, Molza was known as "an accomplished poetess as well as a ravishing singer" (Newcomb 1987, 99). She also played viol, lute and harpsichord. In 1582 she was recruited by Duke Alfonso II d'Este of Ferrara (who had heard her sing and play in 1568) as a lady-in-waiting (*dama d'onora*) to Duchess Margherita Gonzaga. Now a widow, Molza arrived at the court in April 1583, and was awarded a salary of 300 scudi per year plus rooms in the palace. At court she was an active composer, singer, and music teacher, directing and singing with the *concerto delle donne*. She was so esteemed that Duke Alfonso fought a joust in her honour! In 1589 Molza was dismissed from court because of rumours of an affair with composer Giaches Wert. She retired to her hometown where she remained active in the local musical and literary scene. In 1601 Molza was made honorary citizen of Rome, becoming the first woman citizen of that city. She died in 1617, at age 75, leaving a will made out in Latin, Greek and Italian. The inscription on her tomb reads: "A life of such knowledge as that of Tarquinia Molza, falls into the common grave. Died 8 August, 1617, her life spanned 74 years" (in Cook & LaMay 147).

Polissena Pecorina (c.1515 - d. by 1570)

Venetian singer and gentlewoman Polissena Pecorina was a close friend of literati Ruperto Strozzi and composer Adrian Willaert, and sang much of Willaert's music in the 1530s-50s. A letter of 1534 from Strozzi to Florentine poet Benedetto Varchi requests a madrigal "in praise of said Pulisena, who sings very well to the lute and also from part books" (in Agee 1983: 1-2). She once owned a manuscript source for Willaert's *Musica nova*, and it has been speculated that Willaert's arrangements for voice and lute of the madrigals of Philip Verdelot were made for La Pecorina.

Lucia and Isabella Pellizzari (fl. 1580- 1601)

Singers and instrumentalists, Lucia and Isabella Pellizzari were employed as child prodigies, along with brother Antonio, by the theater of the Accademia Olimpica in Vicenza. There they were awarded a salary of 20 ducats each per year to sing, play cornetto and trombone and, later, give singing lessons to young girls. The Pellizzari women were particularly admired on the occasion of March 6, 1585, when they performed choruses by Andrea Gabrieli in a production of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. By 1590 the Pellizzari family was engaged by the court of Mantua where Lucia and Isabella took part in Vincenzo Gonzaga's *concerto delle donne*. They continued to be listed on the court payroll until 1601.

Laura Peverara (fl. 1560-1601)

The premiere soprano of the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*, Laura Peverara (also spelled Peperara) grew up outside of Mantua, the daughter of a wealthy Mantuan merchant (who was also an accomplished harpist); her mother's name was Margherita. By the time the Duke of Ferrara, Alfonso II d'Este saw and heard her, Peverara had already acquired a reputation as a highly gifted and charming singer and harpist. Her beauty and talent had been extolled by the poet Tasso who wrote some 75 poems for her between 1564 and 1567, and she may have been a guest performer at the famed Academia Filarmonica in Verona whose members were involved in the creation of one of three musical anthologies compiled in Peverara's honour. In May of 1580 Peverara came to Ferrara as a *damigella* to the new Duchess, Margherita Gonzaga, where she became the star of the Duke's new ensemble of female virtuoso singers. Peverara was well rewarded: she earned 300 scudi per year (plus 300 scudi each for her husband and her mother), received 10,000 scudi for a dowry, plus apartments belonging to Leonora d'Este, the Duke's late sister, and rooms on the floor below once held for Count Ottavio Landi. In 1583 she married Count Annibale Turca in a wedding whose festivities reached princely proportions and attracted the attention of many poets and chroniclers. Peverara continued to sing in and around Ferrara after the dissolution of the Este dynasty in 1597. She died in 1601, and is buried in the Jesuit church of Ferrara.

Emilia Pia (d. 1528)

Daughter of Marco Pio, lord of Carpi, and Marchesa of Cotrone (a widow from 1500), Emilia Pia figures in Castiglione's *Il libro di Cortegiano* as the faithful and constant companion of Elisabetta, Duchess of Urbino. A friend of Pietro Bembo, Pia is praised for her learning, cultivation (presumably including musical skills) and patronage.

Graziosa Pio (fl. 1510-20s)

A noblewoman and famous Milanese beauty of the House of Maggi, Graziosa Pio was one of Lucrezia d'Este's favourite *dame d'onore*. She is referred to as a graceful player of the lute and singer at the Ferrarese court.

Vittoria Piis(s)imi (fl.1568-1604)

Singer and actress Vittoria Piissimi played to admiring crowds in Italy and France as a member of the *commedia dell' arte* Gelosi company (1568-1604). By the time Henri III of France visited Venice in 1574, her fame had grown enormously, and in 1575 the company she was in was referred to simply as "*la compagnia della Vittoria.*" Piissimi performed in Mantua during the carnival season of 1581 and for the wedding of Vincenzo Gonzaga to Margherita Farnese. She was also a member and director of the *Compagnia Dei Confidenti* (1574-1639), later directed by Flaminio Scala. Piissimi likely remained unmarried as her name remains unlinked to that of any man

Paula Poccino (fl. 1505)

Paula Poccino was a singer and recorder player at the court of Mantua. She sang with Bartolomeo Tromboncino in the *intermedio* of a performance of Plautus's comedy *Asinaria,* which was given as a part of the festivities celebrating the marriage of Alfonso d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara in 1502. She also performed in Verona at the request of Marco Lando. Later, Paula may also have been in the service of Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara (c.1506-07); she is likely related to musician Paolo Poccino whose name appears on both Mantuan and Ferrarese court payrolls.

Dalida de' Putti (fl. 1505-30)

A singer in the entourage of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este during the 1510's, Dalida de' Putti was also the Cardinal's mistress. In 1507 Dalida de' Putti's name appears on Lucrezia's household pay records as "Madonna Dalida de cantore comenzò a dì primo de settembre per tuto dito ano" (in Prizer 1985, 8); she received 96 *lire* per year, the same as other musicians except Tromboncino who received annual salary of 465 *lire*. De' Putti is praised as a fine singer in Oriolo's *Monteparnasso*. In 1508 she performed in an ecolgue by Ercole Pio presented by an ensemble of singers and string players sponsored by Ippolito d'Este, which compared the virtues of Lucrezia Borgia, Isabella d'Este and Elisabetta Gonzaga: "then Dalida, who was dressed, like the others, as a shepherd, began to sing with three companions, among whom was Tromboncino"(in Luzio and Renier, 1979, 317-19). In 1512 de' Putti appears on the pay records of Ferrarese household of Ippolito d'Este. She appears to have stayed in Ferrara in 1520 when Ippolito died, for she is recorded as singing *in concerto* at a lavish banquet at the Ducal palace on January 24, 1529, under direction of Alfonso della Viola.

Virginia Ramponi (Andreini) (1583-1628)

As a sought after *commedia dell' arte* actress and virtuoso singer, Viriginia Ramponi, or Florinda, as she was known on stage, played to admiring crowds in Italy, France, Prague and Vienna with her *Compagnia dei Fedeli* (1601-52). The wife of Giovanni Battista Andreini (Isabella Andreini's son), Ramponi was of the generation of singer-actresses who aided the merger of the two art forms in the earliest operas. She sang the title role in the premiere of Monteverdi's *L'Arianna*, 28 May 1608, in place of the deceased Caterina Martinelli. Her performance "perhaps less 'musical' than 'theatrical' . . . moved many who were present to tears and inspired the poet Giambattista Marino to write about it:

> You heard Florinda, O Mantua,
> There in the theatres beneath your royal roofs,
> Recite the bitter torments of Arianna
> And draw from a thousand hearts a thousand sighs. (In Strainchamps 1985, 170)

Virginia also sang the solo role of *Ingrate* in the 1608 premiere of Monteverdi & Rinuccini's *Il ballo delle ingrate* in Mantua, one of many dramatic and musical entertainments performed for the wedding festivities of Francesco Gonzaga and Margherita de Savoy.

Ippolita Marotta Recupito (fl. 1590s-1620s)

Originally from Naples, Recupito was a favoured musician in the service of Cardinal Montalto in Rome. She was admired by Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, and is mentioned as a *virtuosa* by Giustiniani (*Discorso sopra la musica* 1628). In a letter of 1610, Monteverdi compares Recupito with Adriana Basile and Francesca Caccini (in Stevens 1980, 74-78), in reply to a letter from Basile where she refers to her rival as a "ravishing Roman siren" stealing the attention of Cardinal Ferdinando. In 1620 the Este princess Giulia Felice compared her to Basile, writing that "although La Marotta had a better voice she was not so attractive, whereas La Basile possessed charm of countenance and of voice" (in Stevens 1980, 75).

Cesarina Ricci (c.1573-fl. 1597)

The primary works of Cesarina Ricci, a performer, composer and teacher, born in Cingoli, near Ancona, are published in her *Il primo libro de madrigali à cinque voci. Conun dialogo à otto* (Venice: Angelo Gardano, 1597), dedicated to Cardinal Cinzio Passeri Aldobrandini.

Caterina Romana (fl. 1589)

A singer in the Mantuan *concerto delle donne*, in 1589, Caterina Romana has been identified as a separate person from Caterina Martinelli, "La Romanina," yet little else remains known about this virtuosic soloist.

Europa di Rossi (fl. 1580-1620)

Rossi, a singer and instrumentalist at Mantua, came from a Jewish musical family; she was the sister of composer and violist Salamone di Rossi (c.1570-1628). From c.1586-1592 she is listed on court payrolls under "Extraordinarij"musicians. According to Cook and LaMay, she performed at court festivities, but was "not a member of the Duke's professional *concerto delle donne*" (Cook & LaMay 149). It is likely that Europa di Rossi was also a member of Salamone's group of travelling musicians.

Laura Ruggieri (Ruggeri) (fl. C.1536-1545)

Ruggieri is listed as *madonna Laura musica* in the records of the *musica secreta* of Pope Paul III from 1 January 1538 at least until the extant records cease on 1 January 1545. She was presumably a singer and possibly also an instrumentalist. Her salary of 8 scudi per month (on par with other male musicians in Pope's household) was collected by her husband Francesco Ruggeri for first 6 months of employment. Slim speculates that she could be the Lauretta cited as a fine singer by Oriolo in his *Musicians on Parnassus* (c.1520).

Giovanna Sancia (fl. 1599)

This Spanish singer was a member of the Neapolitan convent of S. Martino famed for its singing nuns. The dedication of Giovenale Ancina's *Tempio Armonico* (1599) mentions convent's musical activities and refers to Sancia as "a neapolitan siren."

Barbera Salutari (fl. 1520s)

Singer and actress Barbera Salutari is today more prominently known for being Machiavelli's long term mistress. From 1518-1525 she took part in productions of *Mandragola* and *Clizia*, and sang *canzone* written for her by Machiavelli in *intermedi* between the acts. She is mentioned in several letters by Machiavelli from 1525-1526. In 1523 Salutari was admitted (along with Machiavelli) to the literary circle *Il Fornaciaio* in Florence.

Barbara Sanseverino (c. 1550s - fl. 1580s)

As the young widow of Giberto Sanvitale, Count of Sala, Barbara Sanseverino came from Rome to Ferrara in January 1576 for the marriage of her step-daughter Leonora to Giulio Tiene, Conte di Scandiano. She is likely one of the several "Scandiano Ladies" who sang on occasion with first Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*. She is also cited as a dancer in Duchess Margherita's *balletti di dame*. In the 1580s, Sanseverino became mistress to Vincenzo Gonzaga who tried in vain to obtain his father's permission to marry her. Her involvement in Ferrarese and Mantuan literary and artistic circles includes a connection with the Accademia degli Invaghiti. Wert's sixth book à 5 of 1577 contains a setting of Tasso's 'Tolse Barbara gente' addressed to her, and she is the dedicatee of Giacomo Moro's *Gli encomii musicali* of 1585 as well as Guarini's madrigal "Dunque puo star," entitled "nome di Barbara," and set by Paolo Virchi (MS F 1358, Modena, Biblioteca Estense). Of her possible vocal performance, Newcomb remarks, "in none of the many tributes to her have I seen mention of any activity or ability as a singer. She appears, however, to have had in abundance every other virtue of the *dama di corte*: beauty, grace, wit, culture, vivacity, and endless energy" (in Newcomb 1970, 13).

Leonora Sanvitale di Scandiano (fl. 1570s-1582)

Leonora Sanvitale, daughter of Giberto Sanvitale, came to Ferrara from Rome along with her stepmother, Barbara Sanseverino, in January 1576 to marry Conte Giulio Tiene di Scandiano, (Leonora's mother died when she was very young, and Sanseverino was only a few years older than her stepdaughter). Newcomb remarks that "before coming to Ferrara the two ladies had in Rome attracted the attention of Tasso and his Duke" (Newcomb 1970, 12). Sanvitale is mentioned in letters by Canigiani and Conosciuto of 1577 and 1579 as singing with Vittoria Bentivoglio and the Bendidio sisters in a *musica secreta* of the Duchess of Urbino at Ferrara. Leonora's musical activity was cut prematurely short, for she died on March 19, 1582.

Margherita della Scala (Caccini) (fl. 1600s)

Margherita della Scala was trained as a singer by Giulio Caccini and became the composer's second wife possibly as early as 1600. She was at some time a member of "Le donne di Giulio Romano," a group formed by Giulio's wife, two daughters and occasional pupils, as well as Giulio himself and his son, Pompeo. She may also have sung with the family consort at the French court in 1604-05.

Claudia Sessa (c.1570 - between 1613-1619)

Singer, instrumentalist, composer and nun at Maria Annunciata in Milan, Claudia Sessa drew such crowds on feast days that "many people were compelled to remain outside" (Bowers 1987, 126). Among the great nobility who visited the convent to hear her are Queen Margaret of Austria, the *serenissimo* of Savoy, Archduke Albert and Infanta Isabelle, cardinals Aldobrandino, San Giorgio, and Piato, the count of Fuentes, and the *Contestabile* of Castile and his wife. Girolamo Borsieri wrote in 1619, "She died young, just when she had begun to compose those same musical works that she then sang at the feasts" (Bowers 1987, 127). Two sacred monodies composed by Sessa remain extant.

Irene Spilimbergo (1538-1559)

A true 'renaissance woman,' Spilimbergo was a fascinating child prodigy, who became an accomplished artist, musician and intellectual. Her father, Adriano di Spilimbergo, a member of the ruling clan of that region, died when she was two, and Irene and her sister were raised by her maternal grandfather, Zuan Paolo da Ponte, an affluent Venetian. Irene learned embroidery, literature and music at a young age, studying singing, sight-reading, lute and other stringed instruments with Venetian lutenist Bartolomeo Gazza and possibly composer Bartolomeo Tromboncino. According to Schutte, "her sophisticated musical taste led her to adopt Tromboncino's style in singing, which she recognized as 'more harmonious and suave than the others'" (Schutte 1991). She and her sister were praised and rewarded with a valuable gold chain by Queen Bona of Poland who heard them sing in the castle of Spilimbergo. Atanagi describes her musical skills, saying,

> As to what Signora Irene learned by way of playing and singing to the lute, the harpsichord, and the viol; and how on each of these instruments, far beyond the usual custom and intellect of women, she approximated the very best masters in these arts, I say nothing, for it would take too long. I shall say only that in a short time, being taught by Gazza, a musician of no small renown in Venice, she learned a vast number of madrigals, odes, and Latin verse, to be recited to the accompaniment of the lute, and that she recited them in such a striking, delicate, and melodious manner that the greatest connoisseurs were amazed. After finally acknowledging, from the singing of a pupil of Tromboncino, the most perfect master of our city, that this way of singing was fuller and more delicate than any other, she learned and sang many of his compositions without other teaching than the guidance of her natural instinct and her own judgment, and she did so with as much grace and delicacy as the pupils of the aforementioned master themselves. (Atanagi 1561; in Einstein 1949 I:50)

Spilimbergo is also listed in F. Caffi's *Storia della musica sacra* (1855) as performing along with Franceschina Bellamano, Hippolito Tromboncino and Perissone Cambio, under the direction of *organisti* Girolamo Parabosco, at the home of the patrician Domenico Venier for his *Accademia Veneziana* (in MacClintock 1956, 181). At age eighteen, Irene took up painting, persuading the great Titian (who did not usually accept pupils) to teach her. According to her biographer Dionigi Atanagi, she "mastered color, foreshortening, *chiarascuro*, anatomy, and the handling of drapery" in only six weeks (in Jacobs 1999, 391). Her untimely death generated a collection of poems in her memory, compiled by Atanagi (*Rime di diversi nobilissimi et eccellentissimi autori in morte della Signora Irene delle Signore di Spilimbergo*, Venice, 1561).

Gaspara Stampa (1524-1554)

The daughter of a wealthy Paduan jeweler, Gaspara Stampa was given a musical and literary education worthy of a courtly lady. Her father died during Stampa's childhood, and in 1530 her mother moved to Venice with her three children (Gaspara, Cassandra and Baldassare) where she set up an intellectual salon. It was here that Stampa first displayed her talents as a poet, singer, and accomplished musician which would earn her great respect throughout Venetian *ridotti*. Gaspara and her sister Cassandra were well known for their exceptional musical skills. Gaspara's voice and technical prowess was praised by her contemporaries, including Gerolamo Parabosco, Ortensio Lando and Perissone Cambio. The question of whether or not Gaspara Stampa was a courtesan has not been successfully settled. Stampa never married, but had two well-documented affairs, although she was typically referred to as a respectable *gentildonna* throughout her life. Her *Rime* were first published in 1554, shortly after her premature death the same year.

Lucia Trevisan (fl.1510-20)

A Venetian Courtesan renowned for her musical abilities, Trevisan is mentioned in Sanuto's *Diarii*, 19, 16 Ottobre 1514.

Lucrezia Urbani (fl. 1589)

Lucrezia Urbani was a singer and harpist from Naples who joined the *concerto delle donne* at Mantua in the late 1580s. She is recorded in Mantuan documents as a court musician for the years 1603-05 and also in one earlier, undated record (see Fenlon 1980, app. II, doc. 64). She may have been a member of the Mantuan *concerto* as early as 1589 when Duke Vincenzo travelled with four women musicians who performed at Ferrara and then at the Florentine wedding celebrations.

Virginia Vagnoli (c.1550-c.1580)

The daughter of a musical family, Vagnoli lived and worked with her musician father for much of her life. She came to Venice from Sienese territory around 1555 where she was active in Venetian *ridotti* as a performer, accompanying herself on the lute. She is likely the "Virginia who sang and played most wonderfully," praised by Antonio Molino in *I fatti, e le prodzze di Manoli Blessi*, Venice: Giolito, 1561. Three poems from Molino's *Grechesche* (9, 14, and 30-31), which also praise Virginia, were set by Annibale Padovano, Andrea Gabrieli, and Gioseffo Guami, and printed by Antonio Gardano in 1564. A treatise of 1556 by Sansovino praises Vagnoli's singing and playing of lute and viol declaring she is even better than the great violists Alfonso della Viola and Alessandro Striggio (in Kirkendale 1993, 81).

From 1566 to 1570, Vagnoli served the court of Urbino (along with her father); Newcomb speculates that she was hired to sing and play instruments in a *musica secreta* of the court. Together Vagnoli and her father were paid 200 scudi per year and given title to property worth another 200 scudi per year in income. As was typical for a female musician, her career was managed by her father; a letter regarding an offer from the Imperial Court in Vienna of 1570, stipulated that her father was to decline or accept on her behalf. The position required that Vagnoli come as the wife of the young cornettist Luigi Zenobi, who was at the time in the service of Emperor Maximilian II. The offer was obviously declined, for by 1573 Vagnoli was married to Alessandro Striggio. As Alessandro's wife, Vagnoli may have lived in Florence in 1575; although she mostly remained in Mantua with her three children, Francesca, Giovanni and Alessandro who were all born and educated in Mantua. Vagnoli seems to have retired from professional involvement in music after her marriage, for she did not sing with either the Florentine or Mantuan *concerti di donne*, although Striggio was involved with both groups.

Caterina Willaert (fl. 1560s)

The identity of Caterina Willaert seems to be linked to that of the famous composer Adriano Willaert, but the exact relationship remains unknown. She is called the daughter of Adriano Willaert by court chronicler Massimo Troiano in his account of the celebrations for the marriage of Guglielmo VI and Renata of Lorraine in Munich (February 1568), but scholars believe that Troiano probably erred as Adriano is not known to have had any children (speculators have also cited her as both niece and sister of the composer). Willaert was active in Venice around 1560 as a singer and composer. One of her pieces was played by Orlando Lasso at prolonged festivities for the marriage of Archduke Wilhelm of Bavaria in 1568.